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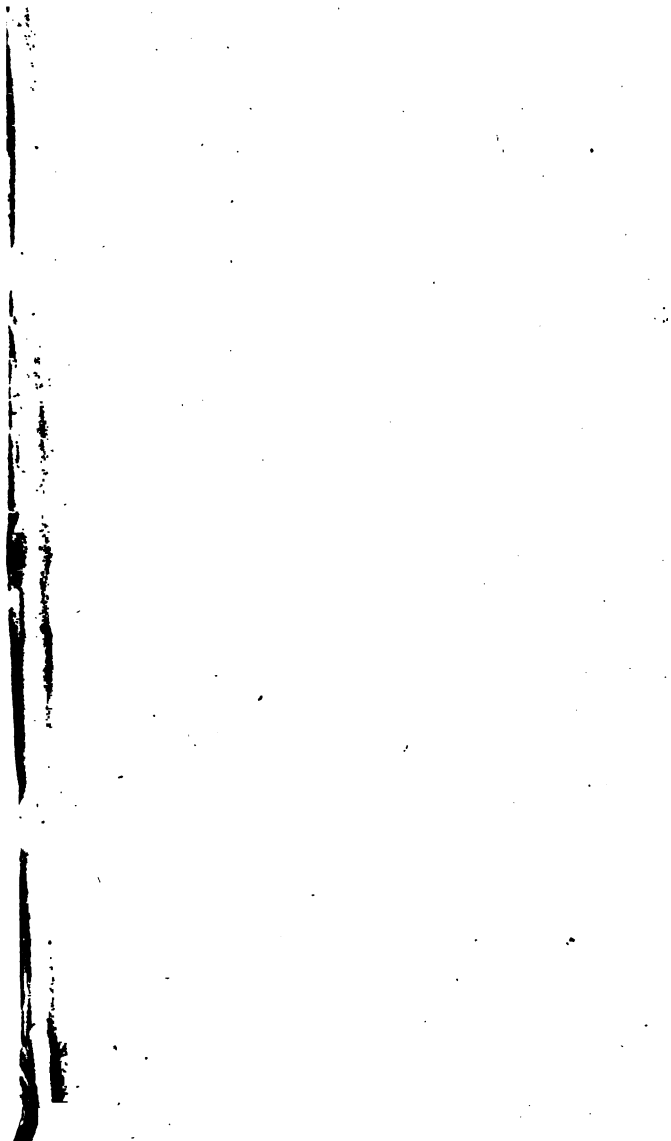
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AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT;

OR,

ANECDOTES

OF

REAL CHARACTERS.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

**BY THE AUTHOR OF THE CASTLE OF MOWBRAY,
ST. BERNARD'S PRIORY, &c.**

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT;

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REAL CHARACTERS.

LETTER I.

MISS CONWAY TO MISS FITZHERBERT.

Bath.

IF your Matilda, my dearest friend, is not wholly forgot, if her long absence has not incurred the irreparable loss of your affection, added to the numberless evils that have overwhelmed her, you will not delay to welcome her unexpected arrival in England with all the cordial warmth of true friendship. But how shall I relate the variety of misfortunes that have unceasingly

ingly pursued me since I left it, now five years ! How different then were the prospects which my sanguine hopes had pictured for my future lot !

The parting with you, my beloved Augusta, was the first stroke of poignant grief my heart ever knew ; but I flattered myself that time would restore me to your valued society, and make ample amends for the painful separation. The interesting event that occasioned it was alone capable to soften its severity. Summoned to an only parent, who, though known but in my infant years, had impressed my mind with the warmest sentiments of love and duty, and the first wish of my heart having long been to behold my dear father ; my kind aunt, who had always supplied the place of her whose loss my ill-fated birth had occasioned, accompanied me to India ; nor could I
have

have one regret at leaving England, but for you, the only friend it contained.

On arriving in India, the arms of a fond, indulgent father received with transport his almost stranger child. But, beloved, lamented father, never, never more can your wretched Matilda find peace and refuge there!—Oh, my friend, that agonizing thought!—But I will endeavour to tell you my sad story as connectedly as I can.

My father's view in going to India, of making a fortune, had proved successful beyond his expectations. We lived at Calcutta, in the height of Indian splendour; nor had I a wish ungratified of all that the gay turn of your Matilda could suggest. Among the English, who formed an elegant and numerous society, it was the fate

of your friend to become involved in a strong and mutual attachment—the unfortunate source of added bitterness to every succeeding misfortune. The affinity of the person to my dear Augusta, gave a power more engaging to those accomplishments he so eminently possessed, of interesting an unbestowed heart, and led me to prefer his society to any other in the crowd of young men who frequented our house. I believe he left England, with his regiment, without your having an opportunity of ever seeing him; it will be doing him injustice to introduce him first by my pen to your acquaintance, so defective as I fear it will prove, to give my Augusta a true idea of her cousin, Henry Mountvillars. He is sensible, polite, and handsome, and equally formed to prove all that is valuable in every connection of life; and with continual opportunities of ground-
ing

ing upon esteem the affection he had inspired, he could not but prove successful in gaining the heart he was solicitous to obtain.

It happened, that through an unpleasant affair, which obliged my father to leave India, not long after I knew Mr. Mountvillars, whose small fortune, and the solemn promise Lord Mountvillars had extorted from him, never to marry without his consent, deprived him of the power to offer his hand publicly, and compelled us to conceal the engagements we both entered into, until his return to England, which was soon expected to take place, should enable him to solicit the consent of Lord Mountvillars.

We embarked for England with the whole of our fortune, a few thousands excepted, and with a bosom agitated

with fluctuating hopes and fears, I commenced my voyage for the destined spot, where the fate of my future life was finally to be fixed. We had been two months at sea, when the calamitous event of shipwreck bereft me of the valued friend and faithful guide, and my father of a beloved sister, in my dear aunt, together with all the noble fortune, for the acquisition of which he had quitted his native country, and sacrificed many years. We were saved, with several others, by the boats of a Portuguese vessel, which beheld the misfortune. With a scanty pittance he had providentially preserved from the wreck, we went to Italy, where a relation resided, our whole reliance now resting on his generosity. But how vainly did we encourage hope!—We found he was dead; and his heirs would not stretch forth the hand of benevolence, to ward off
the

the cruel stroke of accumulating distress, which soon sunk my dear father on the bed of sickness.

During the time we were there, he was drawn into a quarrel among some Italian gentlemen, and rescued from immediate death by the undaunted courage of an Englishman, of the name of Dashwood. But this brave action, that called forth every grateful sentiment of my heart, began an acquaintance that condemned me to endless misery. I had the misfortune to engage his notice, and he solicited my hand; at that time, the near prospect of a fatal end to the lingering illness of my father, made him earnestly entreat me to give him the comfort of seeing me in the protection of a man, apparently so amiable, and possessing an affluent fortune, as the reflection of leaving me friendless, and oppressed

with poverty, which threatened soon to overtake us, would embitter his last moments, and conjured me to spare him such anguish : I consented. Oh, Augusta ! imagine what my sufferings were at that dreadful moment, what poignant afflictions did I endure, to form the resolution of blasting all the hopes I had indulged, and giving up Mountvillars for ever ; but the consoling thought of giving peace to the last moments of a beloved parent, silenced the regrets of this painful sacrifice.

I had scarce given my hand to Mr. Dashwood, but I lost my only remaining comfort ; and the never-ending love that Dashwood had so ardently professed, daily decreased ; his sudden passion gave way to cold neglect ; and before my spirits had recovered from the first shock of the late melancholy event,

event, he deserted me, leaving a letter to inform me he was under the necessity of leaving Italy unexpectedly, but had enclosed a draft upon his banker, sufficient to enable me to live where I chose, as it was probable we should meet no more.

Words cannot paint my distress, which for a time deprived me of my senses; but at length, returning reason gave me power to fly a place so fatal to my peace, and I restored the draft into the banker's hands, where he again might receive it. I could not bear to be obliged to the bounty of a man who had so basely and cruelly abandoned me. An acquaintance informed me, that he learnt Mr. Dashwood was going to the East-Indies; that he had no relations living of the same name, which he had often told me; but to obviate all chance of en-

C 5

countering

countering any of his family, I assumed my former name on my return to England, which I immediately did, after disposing of every valuable to procure the means. I remained for some time in obscure lodgings, in a village not far from the sea-port I arrived at, when chance brought me to the knowledge of Mr. and Mrs. C—, distant relations, worthy, amiable people, who, hearing of my misfortunes through means unknown to me, immediately offered their protection and assistance, and presingly invited my acceptance of their friendship. I am now at their house; but, alas! they have taken to their favour one who, though truly sensible of their goodness, will probably never have it in her power to return the unmerited obligation, but is doomed to wear out a miserable life in hopeless dependence.

— to friends the same. I intreat
giving me

I intreat you, my Augusta, to send me the reviving cordial of a kind letter; if your soothing friendship fails me, what can support my breaking heart? I am grieved to think, that by thus disclosing my unhappy situation, I shall give you pain; and the thought adds another pang to the multitude that rend the bosom of

Your

MATILDA CONWAY.

LETTER II.

MAJOR DELVILLE TO CHALES STOPFORD, ESQ.

Pall-Mall.

AS I know thee, Stopford, a hearty well-wisher to intrigue, I shall relate to thee the damned disappointment I have just met with in my affair with Lady Bell Stuart. The Mar-

quis; her father, invited me among others to his country-seat for the Christmas holidays. Lady Bell and I had often flirted ; and she being a very fine woman, and possessing *golden charms* in profusion, I set her down in my list as game worth pursuing ; but the confounded number of her admirers hindered me from making my proposals, till being come under the same roof, and happy in her Ladyship's encouraging smiles, I declared my sentiments. The preliminaries were settled, and the dear creature consented to bless me with her hand when they came to town ; the company separated, and the Marquis intended going up in a few days, or a fortnight at farthest.

I waited in London, with all the impatience of a man racked with the tortures of love and gambling difficulties : when lo ! the old rascal, instead
of

of coming here, carries her off to Dublin; and here am I cursing my stars at this unexpected stroke, so fatal to all my eager hopes. Some officious, meddling hag must have given the *friendly* hint to my Lord, whose approbation I am not likely to be favoured with; for, to my certain knowledge, he has been on the look out for some most noble alliance for his Bella; but I am not to be so jockeyed: I'll after her, and then, old Argus, look to it.—The devil is in all these fathers and guardians; they ruin all the fine women in Europe. I am much afraid of that fool, the D— of —, who is now in Dublin, and in love with my Bella; at least, he attempted some kind of absurd devoirs a few months since, and my Lord watched the expected denouement with apparent anxiety; but some new whim was started, and away flew his Grace.

My

My reliance is upon the uncontrollable spirit of my charmer, who will have her own will, "woman's chief desire."

This metropolis is the seat of fascinating beauty, wit, and love. Life is mere vegetation away from this exhilarating scene. I can inform thee, Stopford, that a new race of angelic Cyprians, inhabit Mother W—'s rendezvous—What the devil keeps you at Bath? I hoped to have profited by thy experienced councils, and meant to have planned some successful scheme, aided by thy knowing head. I have lost again at Brookes's: if I *lose* my Bell, I *must* seek out some other rich prize, for my necessities are urgent, and money I *must* have.

Write to me immediately, for danger may attend delay. If your epistle should

should not arrive before I am off, it will either be conveyed to me, or wait safely at my lodgings.

Thine,

G. DELVILLE.

LETTER III.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO MISS CONWAY.

The Retreat.

THEY can only judge of what I felt in reading the letter of my beloved friend, who have mourned, like me, years of unceasing regret, the absence and uncertain fate of those they love, and the realizing apprehensions which such circumstances could not fail to excite. In what words can I assure my dearest Matilda how sincerely my heart sympathizes in her unmerited distresses. Why not sooner
confide

confide your sorrow to the faithful bosom of a friend, who might, by sharing, lessen them? Let that friendship, which has ever been the pride of my life, and which no earthly power can affect, soothe and alleviate your woes. Oh, my Matilda, first and only friend of my heart, live for the sake of your Augusta. Complicated and trying are your misfortunes, but let the reflection of having comforted, and added peace to the dying moments of a parent console and support you. Think how much more dreadful such an event would have been, attended by remorse and the upbraidings of a heart sensible of having acted unworthily! but far different, thank Heaven, must be the feelings of Matilda; though anguish and disappointment may embitter her present moments, yet, believe me, time, and the consciousness of well discharged duty, will mitigate the pangs

pangs of affliction, and restore peace to a mind deserving of life's choicest blessings.

I lament the fate of my amiable and unfortunate cousin; as yet he knows not his loss. Had Heaven favoured your attachment, how happy should I have been in the affection of such friends! I have ever heard the highest character of him, but never had an opportunity of seeing him: it shall be my study, when he returns, to soothe and reconcile him to his loss; and his love may at length settle into a firm and tender friendship, eventually productive of the future happiness of you both.

Mr. Dashwood's absence is, in my opinion, the only prospect to ensure you any comfort. Never till this moment have I regretted the loss of that fortune.

fortune I was born to ; had I now the expectations I have been till lately accustomed to look to, with what joy would I have entreated my Matilda to have partaken it with me, and by her society to add the truest pleasure affluence can bestow. ~

You will, no doubt, be surprized to see from whence this letter is dated. The law-suit of my father's, which has been depending some time, he has lost, not being able to produce satisfactory title deeds of the possession in dispute ; and the whole is claimed by a distant relation, Mr. O'Brien, who, having married an Irish lady, resides in Dublin. As the season of the year approaches which usually assembles the *beau monde* in London, my father, not chusing to subject himself to the sneers and insulting pity of his pretended friends, and unwilling to enter into
expences

expences which he can now so ill afford, has, on quitting Fitzherbert Castle, retired to this ancient seat, left him by his grandfather.

The Retreat is situated in a beautiful romantic spot, fourteen miles from Fitzherbert Castle, in the same county, Lincolnshire. The house is old, built in the Gothic style, some part modernized, the grounds laid out with exquisite taste, and the views delightful; the whole exactly corresponds with my ideas of retirement.

Here does your Augusta pass her time in endeavouring to amuse and render her beloved father's life as comfortable as possible; and by her affection and unremitting attention to his will and pleasure, to shew at least her thorough sense of the obligations she owes the best of parents. Here my
dear

dear father, ever anxious and attentive to the future welfare of his Augusta, overlooks and directs her studies, to cultivate those interior accomplishments which alone can render society desirable, and friendship permanent. Few, he often says, can bear solitude; as peculiar powers and elegance of mind are necessary to enable us to draw our resources from ourselves. The giddy throng, hurried away by the tide of pleasure, unattentive to those beauties of the mind and the more delicate sentiments of the soul, through want of proper cultivation, leave an *ennui*, not easily supportable.

The late behaviour of some of my seeming friends, has convinced me how little sincerity is to be expected among our gay and fashionable acquaintance; a conviction painful to a heart warm and sincere in its attachments. It is
with

with infinite reluctance that I am obliged to accept the pressing invitation of Lord and Lady Mountvillars to spend some time in London with them this spring. I have many reasons for declining this visit, the leaving my dear father alone in this retired place, when his spirits can ill support so great a change of life, makes me very uneasy; but he insists on my going. The family also I am to be with, are not the most agreeable, but I shall suspend delineating their characters till I write next. I set off to-morrow, with hopes of soon hearing a better account of my Matilda's spirits.

I remain,

Her faithful and affectionate

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT.

LETTER IV.

LADY BELL STUART TO MRS. O'BRIEN.

Dublin.

I SHALL make no apology, Helen, for my long silence, as I had nothing worth relating to you; but our extraordinary trip to Dublin will no doubt raise your curiosity, which I now take up my pen to satisfy. How much trouble would it have saved me, if your good man had deferred his fit of the gout a little longer! and then you would have been always at hand to counsel and direct me; but to begin my adventures.—I informed you of my situation with that bewitching creature, Delville, and I really had consented to give my hand to him when he came to town, but some old fybil or other gave

gave the marquis a *friendly* hint I suppose; and he chose, instead of taking me to dear London, to whisk me off to Dublin, and gave me only a few hours notice, so that I had no opportunity of escaping; but if Delville has any spirit he will follow. We partake of every amusement, which you know is very agreeable to me, and such a profusion of beau's that it is really quite enchanting; among them is the Duke of L—— an acquaintance of my Lord's, and I half suspect him of being the magnet that attracted the marquis here, as he intends him for his son-in-law, and I—"What, give up Delville, you exclaim;" no, no, O'Brien, but a *husband* with *fortune*, you know, is a necessary appendage to a woman of *ton*. The poor creature is not *overburthened* with sense, the title of dutchess is a sanction for any thing, and Delville shall be my cecisbeo.

I was

I was at the faro table last night, but had abominable ill luck. I have been obliged to have recourse the second time to the Marquis's escrutoire, but did it in a different manner; he generally takes a nap after dinner while I sing to him. I therefore, one evening, after effectually warbling lullaby, got possession of the key, and after replenishing my purse, put it in its former place. I took no more than one dirty hundred, which I had betted with my Lord K——.

I am so much in debt, Helen, that I know not how to extricate myself. Visitors are announced, I can spare no more time. Adieu.

BELL STUART.

LET-

LETTER V.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO MISS CONWAY.

Portland Place.

I ARRIVED here a week since, but till this moment have not had an opportunity of writing to my Matilda. Lord and Lady Mountvillars received me with kindness, and Miss M—— said, she was glad to see me in Portland Place, though her looks evidently belied her speech; she is a *petite figure*, with an intolerable share of pride, and a vain desire to be thought handsome; she wishes to be considered as the first of whatever company she appears in, and too visibly avails herself of every little opportunity of shewing the superiority rank only gives her over many of her acquaintances; she seldom speaks, but when she does, it is generally satirical remarks on those who unfortunately

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nately attract her notice or excite her envy; infomuch that ſhe conſtantly brings to my recollection the lines of Pope—

With witty malice ſtudious to defame;
Scorn all her joy, and laughter all her aim.

My Matilda will readily conceive, that two diſpoſitions ſo different as Miſs Mountvillar's and your Auguſta's, can never be very cordial; I ſhall however think myſelf happy to eſcape her obſervation.

Lady Sophia L—— called in ſoon after my arrival; ſhe was one of my former acquaintances, but affected not to recollect me till Miſs Mountvillars introduced me; when in liſping accents, and an affected manner, her ladyſhip begged my pardon, ſaying, “ I did not know you were in town; I heard that
Sir

Sir Vincent had retired to live in the country upon his late loss;" then turning to Miss M——, "My dear, do you go to the play to night—all the world is to be there?" Was not this too provoking?—I affected as much non-chalance as her Ladyship, and taking up a newspaper, made an apology to Lady Mountvillars, saying, I expected my milliner, and walked out of the room without vouchsafing Lady Sophia a parting look.

Is it not astonishing, my Matilda, that pride should have such an ascendancy over the human race, as to deaden it to all sensibility, and deprive it even of common politeness to persons, however amiable, who happen to be inferior, either in birth or fortune, to themselves? Lord Mountvillars introduced me yesterday to the earl of Raymond, who, approaching with a con-

ceited air, exclaimed, "By heaven, Mountvillars, a very angel!" then with a familiar stare, "Charming Miss Fitzherbert, how could you deprive the *beau monde* of so bright an ornament?"

"My Lord, you much over-rate my perfections; but this is a strain your Lordship is so accustomed to, that"—

"Upon honour, Madam, you wrong your beauty to take it merely as compliment; he must be an infidel indeed, who could behold such charms without feeling their influence, and paying instant homage."—He continued talking in this ridiculous strain till he took his leave. His familiar manner disgusts me; he seems to think no woman can withstand him; he is a most disagreeable coxcomb, a great friend of Lord M——'s, and they are chiefly together.

Lord M—— pays very little attention to his family, but I will not allow
my

my pen to run into observation, till I know more of his Lordship's disposition. I am summoned to attend the ladies' airing; must therefore leave off, with assuring my ever dear friend that I remain her's sincerely,

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT.

LETTER VI.

MAJOR DELVILLE TO CHARLES STOPFORD, ESQ.

Dublin.

BY heaven I have lost her again, Charles.—What an unlucky dog am I! No sooner was I arrived at this cursed place, than I sallied forth in search of my Bella, and sent Richards to every hotel in town, to learn where they were, when just as I passed the castle, whom should I meet but the

Marquis; he started, and bowing, rather coolly, very obligingly acquainted me with a long list of engagements that wholly deprived him of the happiness of receiving me at his house. Fortune, however, favoured me the following evening with an interview with Bella, kind as ever, I presaged by her heavenly smiles; but the damned Duke, Stopford, has routed me completely: with all the energy of despairing love and jealousy, I should have assailed the false fair, had not a *billet doux* most providentially come in my way, and snatched me from perdition. By heavens, Charles, I was in the fair way of promotion, of sharing the renown of branching honours o'er my laurelled brows, an ornament more deprecated by thy friend than all the cursed frowns of fortune collected. I transcribe the inestimable lines—I picked up the epistle this morning on the stairs leading to her

her

her Ladyship's apartments, as going to pay my devoirs.—Read it and wonder.

“ My dear Lord, I am in absolute
“ want of an hundred guineas, and
“ claim performance of your promise ;
“ do not attempt to shuffle off with
“ excuses; you surely are not the fool
“ to let your wife's extravagances limit
“ your expences; remember your bond,
“ my Lord. I am half dead with fear
“ lest my imprudence should be disco-
“ vered ; I shall probably be compelled
“ to take a private trip, and the ex-
“ pences that may ensue you must not
“ expect me to be burthened with ; if
“ the little wretch should live, we
“ must dispose of it in some humble re-
“ ceptacle or other, among the little
“ unknowns of our fashionable friends.
“ Adieu, send me the notes in the

“ packet of gloves, Miss N—— left
“ for me with your wife.”

“ B— S—.”

What say you, Charles? For my part, I console myself with the delectable thought, as her Ladyship's sentiments are now completely developed, I will adopt their adorable freedom, and the devil is in it, Stopford, if they are not propitious to me also. Bravo! my Bella.

“ Fame, wealth, and honour, what are you to
“ love?”

That her Ladyship will much longer engross my roving heart, is a certain consequence, for

“ Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
“ Spreads his light wings, and in a moment
“ flies.”

Let

Let the poor devil, his Grace, tie the gordian knot, I will no longer impede the happy event that leaves my charmer liberty to be all I wish. I hear the Marquis does not intend remaining here much longer. Adieu, Charles, you will see me when their departure takes place.

G. DELVILLE.

LETTER VII.

MRS. O'BRIEN TO LADY BELL STUART.

Bath.

YOU must take it as a very particular favour, my dear Bell, that I bestow on you a thing so precious at Bath, as time; my engagements are so various and numerous, that it is really fatiguing even to arrange them. I will just give you a little sketch of the life

I lead at present; a breakfast party to begin the day, then walk, take a look in at Dash's riding house, hear the news at the pump-room, and make parties for the evening; then dancing, cards, and scandal, conclude the evening: private balls and concerts are quite the thing.

Last night I lost twenty guineas at Mrs D——'s rout, and as many more at the rooms afterwards, and ended the night in dancing and flirting at Lady Disney's ball and *soupe*—a-propos of flirting; my vanity has received no small gratification from the attentions of the smartest man here, a Mr. Stopford, a very handsome conceited fop, lavish of compliments, but saucy to the last degree. He and Sir George N—— have been my constant dangles.

Mr

Mr. O'Brien, poor man, is very conveniently laid up with the gout, and never stirs out, so that I meet with no interruptions from that quarter. One should not be able to exist without those necessary animals, beaux, to amuse us. Sir George N—— is a most finished coxcomb, very fine and delicate, a man of *virtue*—he has just left me; he introduced himself to me this day, exclaiming, “How divine you look to-day, (in an affected drawling tone) it is ridiculous to ask you how you do, for you always appear enchanting.”

After relating some trifling anecdotes, he said, "Do you honour the rooms to-night, Mrs. O'Brien; it was an extreme frosty air last night; I swear my hands were quite *chapped*, and it is so *barbare* to have a red fist—can you, my dear Madam, give me a receipt for
c 6 their

their cure.” “ Oh! yes, (I replied, aping his delicate voice) enclose them every night in the soft limits of a chicken glove, and they will then positively be irresistible.” “ Oh! Madam, you flatter.” Is not this Narcissus quite charming, my dear? But Stopford is the fellow for me, all life and spirits, so saucy and *dégagée*. I can spare no more time, Bell; I must now go and *adonise* myself with all possible attention, to fix the dear man, and then may all the powers of female ingenuity assist me to plague him !

O'Brien summons me; he is duced cross; confinement, to one young and so gay, is ill brooked, though he has his favourite cards and dice companions ever with him. It is well we have gained the law-suit, or we should have been done up; but as it is, fear—but
hang

hang fear and reflection, with all their dismal train.—“Come thou goddess fair and free,” is more natural to the inclinations and pen of your

HELEN O'BRIEN.

LETTER VIII.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO MISS CONWAY.

Portland Place.

THOUGH furrounded with every thing we regard as conducive to happiness, I feel so little in reality of that undisturbed state of mind, which can be amused with all the trifling occurrences of fashionable life, that I earnestly wish I could be permitted to return to the peaceful scenes of my favourite retreat.

You

You will not be surprised, my Matilda, to hear me talk in this way, after you have perused this long epistle. So many weeks should not have passed without my writing to my dear friend, had not a thousand obstacles, and some disagreeable occurrences, prevented me. Miss Mountvillars's envy and capricious humours render her a most unpleasant companion; but in the amiable manners and kindness of my aunt, I find the only relief my present society affords. To add to the inconceivable torment I have endured from Lord Raymond's constant assiduities, he has lately made proposals, which Lord Mountvillars urges me to accept, with an importunity that surprises me, as my dear father, to whom his Lordship applied, unknown to me, has, with his accustomed indulgence, left me to pursue the uninfluenced dictates of my own heart: the great boldness and un-

principled

principled manners of Lord R—— admit not a moment's hesitation how to determine; I have entirely rejected his *condescending* offer, for such he evidently thinks it—this you may judge is not a little mortifying to his pride; but of that your Augusta has her equal share.

Wherever I go, his Lordship, not to be repulsed, is instantly at my side; and though I have really been provoked to downright rudeness, he will not take an affront, and rallies it off with presuming insolence; but his manners, so disgusting to me, have attracted the admiration of Miss Mountvillars, who makes the most forward advances, though with the mortification to see them all disregarded. This, no doubt, is a secret source of enmity in her bosom to your poor friend, and she embraces every opportunity of tormenting
me

me by some ridiculous speech or behaviour.

The other day, when Lord R—— was here, importuning me to accompany the party to M—— house, I urged the excuse of having letters to write; which could not be deferred: “Then, upon my soul,” cried his Lordship, “if you are resolved to be so inhuman, to spoil all the gaiety of the charming evening I flattered myself with enjoying at M—— house, you must permit me to engage myself to a *petit souper, tête-à-tête*, with you, by which time you will have satisfied the pressing demands of your correspondents.” “Indeed,” said Miss Mountvillars, “your Lordship cannot be spared from our party; I challenge your hand the first two dances. Good heaven! have you so little of the ruling passion you are now paying court to, as to desert all others, who,

who, perhaps, have a little more taste than Augusta?"

A few days since, we had an elegant concert, at which your friend was requested to perform; and this circumstance introduced me to his Lordship's brother, the hon. Mr. Dashwood, who, if I may judge from so short an acquaintance, is equally his superior in mind and person; he is remarkably handsome, and perfectly answers the description of manly beauty, which you may remember, my dear Matilda, in former gay hours we amused ourselves with delineating; he sung a beautiful Italian duet with me, with all the taste and excellence of a perfect connoisseur in harmony. In the course of the evening, I had the pleasure of engrossing a great share of his conversation, which was elegant and agreeable beyond any I had before met with; Miss Mountvillars

Mountvillars, unwilling I should monopolize his attentions, (as she termed it) took a malicious pleasure in calling out to him, just as he was taking his seat next me at supper, "Come, Mr. Dashwood, you must sit here, that is my Lord Raymond's place; my Lord, do you suffer your brother to usurp your right?"—"A thousand thanks, my dear Miss Mountvillars," replied his Lordship, "I was unwilling to deprive Miss Fitzherbert of company which seemed so *entertaining*; but I suppose Mr. Dashwood will not dispute my prior claim to those bewitching smiles," seating himself by me with all the assurance imaginable. "I allow no such claim, my Lord," said I, rising, "and think myself perfectly at liberty to chuse my party;" so saying, I walked to the other side of the table next to a lady I had before found very agreeable. I was greatly hurt at thus being made

an

an object of attention to a large party, not a few of whom would, I knew, enjoy my distress.

I have lately seen many instances of behaviour in Lord Mountvillars, that discover him to possess, under the shew of politeness and great good humour, a violent, imperious temper, and unfeeling heart : he seems to consider implicit compliance, in every opinion and inclination he holds, the indispensable duty of all who are unfortunate enough to be connected with him : how dreadful would be dependence on the inflexible will of such a man ! he is as great a gambler as his friend, Lord Raymond, whom he regards with more deference and attention than he bestows on any one else.

I am now going to the park, and being engaged to Lady T——'s concert
in

in the evening, cannot dedicate a longer time at present to my Matilda; for, indeed, in town, Sunday is the greatest visiting morning. I will not, however, finish my letter to-day, adieu.

CONTINUATION.

The Retreat.

Oh, my Matilda, how unhappy is your poor friend! my dear father lies dangerously ill; I received a letter from Brown just as I was stepping into the carriage, a few mornings since, and perceiving a strange hand, instantly opened it. Good heaven! what were my surprise and grief at reading the fatal intelligence! I acquainted Lord and Lady M——, and immediately set off, accompanied by Lord M——. When we arrived here, Brown, who received us at the door, appeared with such evident marks of sorrow in her countenance,

nance, that every horrid idea rushed into my mind, and I fell senseless in her arms. On recovering, Lord M— informed me Sir Vincent was still living, but he could not flatter me that he was past danger; I hastened to him.—Oh! my friend, I hardly know what my thoughts, my feelings were, as I approached the bed, where lay my beloved father, pallid and emaciated; his languid eyes brightened with a gleam of joy on seeing me; I fell on his neck.—“My Augusta,” he cried, “thank God I am permitted once more to behold my dear child.”—“Oh talk not so, my dearest father, you yet will live, I trust, many happy years to bless your Augusta!”—“Compose yourself, my love, I fear to give you false hopes of my recovery,—I fear it is impossible—forget not now the instructions, my dear Augusta, I have so often inculcated on the subject; let me have
the

the comfort of seeing their efficacy in this hour of trial; be resigned to the will of heaven."—Tears wholly deprived me of the power to speak; I scarcely heard what more he said, till these last words—"My sister, I doubt not, will be a faithful guide and friend to your youth."

Lord Mountvillars then entered; grief so overpowered me, that Lord M—— advised me to retire; but after a short time I returned, when my father took my hand, and giving it to Lord Mountvillars, said, "Receive, my Lord, into your guardianship and protection my beloved child, and supply to her the place of her father, and—" nature was exhausted, he fainted, but soon recovered with proper medicines. Some time after, I withdrew to my apartment, there to indulge the piercing sorrow that oppressed my heart:

two days have elapsed in this dreadful manner; I am going to attend him. Adieu.

CONTINUATION.

All hopes of his surviving are at an end. Dearest Matilda, how can I support this fatal blow! The approach of death is always dreadful, though I could resign myself into his arms with calmness, and even hail him as my deliverer from a world of misery; but now, he tears from me, distracting thought! my only parent, my beloved father. Sainted spirit of my revered mother, calm your Augusta's aching soul; tell her, her loved father is but summoned to scenes of never-ending bliss, a blessed exchange for worldly care and trouble. I can write no more; farewell, my Matilda; forget not your unhappy orphan friend

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT.

LET-

LETTER IX.

MISS MOUNTVILLARS TO LADY BELL STUART.

Retreat.

I KNOW, Stuart, you will pity the melancholy Harriot, when you see whence this letter comes ; yes, here I am, in this horrid dull place, *bored* to death with the intreaties of Lady Mountvillars, who, wishing me to accompany her, I at length consented to quit the dear town, just at a time when every thing gay and fashionable is assembled, to exert my endeavours to console my sentimental cousin : her father is very ill ; poor soul ! I suppose he will die ; she is very seldom out of his room ; my mother and she are the two nurses. I amuse myself as well as I can with walking about, and playing on the harpsichord ; I dare say, my dear, you heartily join with me in hating

ing

ing this shocking place. I wish the old man was out of the way, that I might have a little enjoyment before the season is over. I have been thinking I shall look charmingly in a smart suit of mourning, and have all the men to myself, as I suppose Augusta will not appear for some time. I am called—adieu for the present.

CONTINUATION.

Sir Vincent Fitzherbert made his exit yesterday evening. As you know I hate every thing dismal, I shall not attempt a description of the last scene. Miss Fitzherbert, I imagine, thinks grief adds new charms to her pretty face, and is therefore in most immoderate distress; the worst of it is, we are to be plagued with her, as she is left under the guardianship of my father; but however she can't dash away much,

as her circumstances are not very brilliant; poor creature, I hope Lord M— will get her married as soon as possible out of the way. As we shall probably now soon meet, I defer writing any more. Adieu.

Yours,
HARRIET MOUNTVILLARS.

LETTER X.

LADY BELL STUART TO MRS. O'BRIEN.

Pall Mall.

ONCE more returned to dear London, I again resume my pen, to inform you what has passed since I last wrote.

My unlucky Delville, who was the cause of my being whirled to Dublin, followed us; the first person he met there,

there, was the Marquis, which at once crushes all hopes of his attending me publicly. My Lord has insisted upon my rejecting the Major, but we contrived two or three interviews, and he almost brought me to settle plans of a different cast from what we at first intended. We remained no longer in Ireland than the Marquis could arrange his affairs: I wish I knew the old meddling witch who first informed him of our mutual *penchant*; if I ever find her out, Helen, may all the demons of malice and revenge assist me to torment her.

The Duke of — is ever at my elbow; I believe I shall convert the fool into a husband, the first time he mentions matrimony again; for money I must have, some way or other. Oh the dear delights of the faro and commerce tables! with what pleasure shall

I again enter your enchanting rounds, when once I touch the Duke's thousands! Poor creature, he does not expect the little hundred accounts he must discharge when I am Duchefs of ——. My creditors are perpetually dunning for their money, but I silence them by the assurance I am speedily to be married.

The Duke is for ever entertaining me with an account how good a husband he made his first Lady, and of his fashionable gaiety when a student at the university. Sometimes he attempts to amuse me with what he calls good stories; such as riding post to town without money in his pocket, or a servant to attend him;—being invited to drink in an alehouse by one of his own tenants; who took him for the Duke's valet, and such like stuff, during the narration of which he is continually
fidgeting

fidgeting off and on his chair, for he never rests two minutes quietly in the same place or posture.

Don't you think, O'Brien, my intended *caro sposo* is a most interesting original? But *n'importe*, we women of *ton* don't much trouble ourselves about the *intellects* of our sposo's, their *pockets* are sufficient for our purposes.

I have called on the Mountvillars since I have been in town; Harriet was all astonishment to see me—poor girl! she is in a sad situation, dying with envy at the beauty of her cousin, Miss Fitzherbert, who is with them; and, to say truth, she is a perfect beauty, and attracts the notice of all the men, though she never gives herself the trouble to be civil to any one of them, beyond what good breeding and politeness requires; while Harriet

is at an infinity of pains to catch one poor heart, whose owner is the avowed admirer of her cousin ; but Lord Raymond flights her *endeavours*, and the mortification of disappointment enrages her still more against Miss Fitzherbert. She will not acknowledge any particular partiality for Lord R——, though one must be blind not to see it. I hear she has lately had a legacy of a few thousands, of the care of which I intend relieving her, in some degree, the first time we get to faro. She will be a good pigeon for me. Adieu my dear O'Brien, believe me ever yours

BELL STUART.

LET-

LETTER XI.

MISS CONWAY TO MISS FITZHERBERT.

Bath.

WITH a heart weighed down by grief, and penetrated with the sincerest sorrow for that of a beloved friend, how incapable am I to offer arguments of consolation ! Ah, my Augusta, what can I say to calm and alleviate grief like yours ! Alas, to argue with sorrow, I know, by fatal experience, is unavailing, and that offices of this kind afford but a wretched relief. Your own superior sense, my amiable friend, will teach you that submission to the decrees of nature is a duty we owe to the will of heaven. Death is ever contemplated with horror, and the loss of an affectionate and only parent, is a shock difficult to sustain. But let

me intreat you, Augusta, to moderate your affliction, nor suffer melancholy to prey upon your spirits; write to me, I beseech you; I have a thousand fears for your health, which Miss Mountvillars acquaints me has greatly suffered: and, with impatience equal to my friendship, I shall expect the answer of Augusta, whose happiness is so essential to that of

MATILDA CONWAY.

LETTER XII.

MRS. O'BRIEN TO LADY BELL STUART.

Bath.

I CONGRATULATE you, dear Bell, on your return to the gay metropolis; knowing its congeniality to your disposition, and how much more suitable it is to your affairs.

I en-

I entirely approve of your intention to bestow your hand upon his Grace: marriage for love is an exploded custom, observed now only by those unfashionable victims of poverty and sentiment, who have no recommendation but virtue, love, and constancy, and all that stuff. I impatiently long to address you by your new title.

I have been so pestered by that plague, Stopford, that I was really tired of the man, and resolved to get rid of him, for some time at least. I never met him, but he poured forth such volleys of praises, prayers, and unceasing protestations, that I might have imagined I was hearing some fustian-ranter of the drama. Darts, flames, &c. &c. were ever flowing from his tongue; and I swear, Bell, he has worn out the knees of a new pair of *inexpressibles* at my feet; thank Heaven he

is gone, but of that you shall hear more particularly.

Stopford's scheme was to get your friend to accompany him in a little excursion to Brighton ; but not being at present willing to leave Bath, I have kindly provided him with a companion, who will listen to his vows with a most encouraging silence ; this is no other than my maid Rawlins, who wishes to see her relations in that part of the world : the regulations were these : I consented to accompany him, on condition that I should wear a mask under my deep veiled bonnet, and not be obliged to speak till we arrived at the destined place. Overjoyed, he was all compliance ; the time was fixed, and away went Rawlins with her enraptured companion ; they must be near their journey's end by this time, and the girl will well know how to manage

manage when once near her own village. I shall dread his return, as I doubt not he will meditate some vengeance against me ; but by letters Mr. O'Brien received to-day, I believe we shall be obliged to quit Bath very soon.

I was the other day at my brother's ; the poor man is heartily tired of his charming half, for her ladyship's large estate was his only attraction ; and yet to be sure she is a most delectable creature, about seventy, dresses in the neat primitive style, and looks so respectable, so different from the flirts around her, in her little tippet, long ruffles, short petticoats, and all the rest of her accoutrements—she is quite ashamed to see how we girls dress ; she calls it indecent, and wonders how people can make themselves so ridiculous. The other evening, happening to be at the same party, she made signs to

me to come and speak to her, when with a very grave face she said, "My dear Helen, do cover your neck a little more; you might as well go without any handkerchief at all as to wear it so; and see how the fellows stare at you."—Poor soul! I believe every hat she sees on one side, and every thing smart and knowing, gives her a fit of spleen; she says she is extremely sorry to see me follow dissipation so much. Heavens, where can this old woman have got such notions!—Monstrous, to suppose any thing human can breathe under a little laced cap, and gown of substantial silk, two inches thick; yet I assure you the old lady is not without her share of vanity; she entertains me sometimes with a tedious account of her former conquests and cruelties.

Sir George N—— brought me yesterday a cameo to look at, saying,
"I have

“ I have just received it ; pray examine it Madam ; I never saw any thing so perfect ; it is a Venus ; I have had a great number of my friends, virtuosos, to look at it : what an enchanting leg ! pray observe, Madam ; and the whole body, so well turned, so beautiful ; it is, indeed, an exact beauty ; and I may truly say, that I have had some of the most distinguished microscopes to examine it limb by limb. I expect every day a statue of a Venus, which was found at Herculaneum, but unfortunately the head is lost ; and I intend, Madam, with your permission, to have your’s copied to replace it, for no face but your’s, charming Mrs. O’Brien, is worthy so divine a body.”—What a ridiculous puppy ?—But, indeed, my dear Stuart, it is time to bid you adieu.

Your’s,

HELEN O’BRIEN.

LETTER XIII.

MAJOR DELVILLE TO C. STOPFORD, ESQ.

Pall-Mall.

REJOICE with me, Charles, I shall infallibly gain my divine Bella; and how could I ever doubt it? I who have subdued every woman I chose to attack! I will allow, Stopford, we fashionable men are well stocked with effrontery—but you shall hear.

†

Æolus, friendly to my wishes, wafted me quickly to England; pursuing my prize, I flew to Pall-Mall, and just reached the door as she was stepping into her chariot. Not in the least surprized, she cried, “Ah, my dear Major, are you arrived?” asked me which way

way I was going, and, with the kindness of an angel, permitted me to accompany her ; your fertile imagination may perhaps anticipate our conference. Speaking of her trip to Dublin, she uttered in a soft languishing tone, " What trouble have you given me, Delville !" Guess, Charles, what a fine embroidered speech I returned ; downright flattery is the only way to manage these silly creatures ; and if they *will* believe our nonsense, we are not to blame. I rehearsed my catalogue of vows and protestations, and was rewarded with smiles of approbation, and assurances enough to encourage the most animating hope. After talking in this strain till I was absolutely hoarse, we parted.

Punctual to our agreement, the following morning I waited upon her Ladyship ; the enchanting Stuart was
sitting

sitting upon the sofa, painting a beautiful table; I seated myself by her, and familiarly enough threw my arm round her waist; not in the least displeased, she talked and smiled like a Venus. Join with me, Charles, in returning thanks to imprudence, and the God of Love, for inspiring my tongue. The Marquis soon came in; never was man so struck dumb with anger and astonishment, when, starting up, I wished him a good morning with an easy indifference, and expressed my pleasure in meeting him so soon in England. He made me a cold, stiff bow, and turning to his daughter, said, "I came to speak with you alone, Lady Bell"—"My Lord give me leave to retire;" I bowed to my charmer, and decamped. I have not a moment longer to spare thee.

G. DELVILLE.

LET-

LETTER XIV.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO MISS CONWAY.

Portland Place.

I AM truly sensible, my dearest Matilda, if your kind and soothing friendship in endeavouring to console and reconcile me to my irreparable and ever to be lamented loss. What alas ! is all human consolation ? Can it efface from our memory every endearing word and action of an object we long have loved ? Ah no ! every remembered mark of tenderness and affection rises with redoubled force to my imagination, and seems to upbraid me with numberless little instances of unintentional neglect ; I derive some comfort in reflecting, that my beloved father was one of the best of men, and with gratitude endeavour to console myself

I had

I had such a parent to whom I cannot forbear applying these lines of Milton.

“ ———— Since to part,
“ Go heavenly guest, ethereal messenger,
“ Sent by whose sovereign goodness we adore,
“ Gentle to me and affable has been
“ Thy condescension, and shall be honor'd ever
“ With gratefull'st memory.”——

But though this is a subject I am never tired of myself, I ought in regard to my friend, to forbear dwelling any longer upon it.

Lord Mountvillars is my aversion; I never before knew so much of his real disposition; he is obstinate and imperious to a degree; and already exercises his authority as my guardian in regard to Lord Raymond, who is still more troublesome than ever. I have declared my extreme dislike to his Lordship,
but

but Lord M—— encourages him, and almost commands me to do the same. I cannot, my Matilda, soon forget the grief which so lately and still engrosses every thought: what cruelty and indelicacy in Lord M—— already to join in persecuting me with Lord R——'s addresses. My friend, I foresee many an unhappy hour which your Augusta will experience.

My dear Lady Mountvillar's health is, I fear, very essentially injured: she is indeed very amiable, and, I believe, loves me; I revere her as my protectress; were it not for her and my Matilda, I should indeed be miserable. My dear aunt sympathizes in my sorrows, and equally laments an affectionate and beloved brother. But alas! she cannot mourn like me, for even time itself cannot recompense my loss. Oh Matilda, Matilda!——I was obliged to

lay

lay down my pen, for sad recollection rendered me unable to proceed.

Miss Mountvillars is evidently of the same sentiments as her father in urging me to marry the earl of R——; she is for ever teasing me on the disagreeable subject. The other morning while I was in my apartment, she sent and requested to see me in the drawing room. I went, but guess my surprise and anger to find Lord R—— there; I had always determined to avoid him, if possible; I would have retreated immediately, but unfortunately he was too quick for me to escape, and caught hold of my gown; I was obliged to return. “Charming Augusta,” (cried the odious creature) “why will you thus shun me? What offence has your Raymond committed to be deprived of your divine presence? By heaven this dear hand must be mine; permit me, lovely

lovely girl, to salute you as my destined bride ;"—and the wretch offered to kiss me. I started back with indignation, " My Lord your behaviour is both wanting in manners and respect." " Respect!" cried his Lordship, " cold, inanimate word! t'was never meant, my charmer, to grace the soft accents of a lover. Come, by G—you are too cruel, you will spoil that angel face with frowning; bless me with your hand, Lord Mountvillars favours my wishes, and only your consent is wanting to render me supremely happy." " My consent, my Lord, you will never have, wherefore will you continue a subject so unspeakably disagreeable. I have given you my final answer that I never can nor will listen to your proposals." He caught hold of my hand—" Let me go, my Lord, do not add to your former insolent behaviour by—" Hold! my dear creature, for
heaven's

heaven's sake forgive me; the violence of my passion hurried me too far, but say you will not cruelly debar me the happiness of seeing you." "My Lord, I can promise nothing, my mind is in too distracted a state; I intreat you not to add to my distress by still persecuting me with your addresses; if you really have any of that love you so ardently profess, you will never more speak on a subject which greatly hurts me." "Love you! my charmer, can you doubt it? How can I more forcibly shew it, than by wishing you to enter with me into joy and happiness, and to forget that foolish grief which upon my soul spoils your pretty eyes with weeping."

"Unfeeling wretch" was all I could say, and burst into tears. I went towards the door; Lady Mountvillars that moment entered; she looked with surprise

surprise at Lord R—— and me, the cruel Harriet had slipped out of the room; it was plainly a scheme of her's to torment me.

I went to my dressing room, and soon after my amiable aunt came; she lamented with me the inflexible temper of Lord M——, who is resolved on my marriage with Lord Raymond. Is this a time, my Matilda, for proposals of this kind? a time when my heart is torn with sorrow—a mind possessed with the least sensibility must be severely wounded with behaviour so unfeeling. But the countenance of my aimable aunt still augmented my distress; the marks of inward anguish were there too plainly portrayed. I earnestly enquired the cause; she took my hand, “ Oh my Augusta, child of my heart, may you never experience the woes of your poor aunt! though
thy

thy fate and mine seem too similar. Your sorrow renews my own, and breaks open afresh those wounds, which though time has somewhat closed, that bourn alone can heal, where the wretched cease from trouble, and the weary are at rest." Saying this she leaned her head upon my neck, and burst into tears—I mingled mine with hers, and was wholly unable, through a variety of painful feelings, to afford any relief to my dear afflicted aunt.

“ Yes, my Augusta,” continued she, recovering herself, “ I was obliged to marry a man my soul abhorred, but never, if in my power to prevent it, shall your happiness be so sacrificed. Yet, my Augusta, we must submit to the will of heaven, nor dare to doubt its providence. I have done it hitherto, and heaven alone can know the woes I have undergone. At some future

ture period I will confide my tale of woe to the sympathizing breast of my Augusta; and I thank heaven for having, in you, compensated for the absence of my only dutiful and affectionate child. In my Augusta and my Henry centers my whole happiness. Calm your agitated spirits, my love, and rely on my affection and endeavours to alter the determination of Lord Mountvillars." She left me and went in search of Lord M——; but alas! to little purpose; he continues inflexible. Amidst all my sufferings, how happy am I in having so amiable an aunt, so sincere a friend. To overcome by distress, the most trifling attentions, which seem to flow from a heart participating and anxious to soothe, cannot fail to awaken the most lively gratitude, the most tender esteem. Such are the attentions of the amiable Dashwood to your Augusta, and he

being the intimate friend of Mr. Mountvillars, ensures him a welcome reception by Lady M——, who can thereby indulge in conversation respecting her beloved son. He never fails imparting to Lady M—— any communication he may have received from his friend, and accompanies his narrative with every little circumstance that can give pleasure to the fond heart of a mother, who almost looks upon him as another son. When Mr. Dashwood visits us, he generally contrives to place himself between Lady M—— and your friend; and in the most delicate and tender manner endeavours to revive my drooping spirits by his sensible and animated conversation, and seems with reluctance to resign his place, when near me, to his brother. It is impossible not to feel sensibly the difference. The one approaches with all the assurance of a favoured lover, and, disgustingly familiar

miliar, incessantly repeats his odious protestations of love, and unfeelingly ridicules my distress and aversion to him. The other, with the most flattering solicitude, seeks occasion, in a hundred little instances, to amuse and divert my mind from the melancholy which preys upon it, and seems anxious to convince me how much he interests himself in my happiness.

I must lay down my pen, but will resume it again when my spirits are calmer than at present; adieu, my dearest Matilda, believe me in all situations of life your faithful and truly affectionate

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT.

LET-

LETTER XV.

LADY BELL STUART TO MRS. O'BRIEN.

Pall Mall.

MY affairs go on charmingly, Helen. Delville is my attending *amant*, and constantly in waiting to amuse my leisure hours; but we are obliged to appear rather more distant than formerly; in public. As my *convenient* Duke will very shortly receive the blessing of my fair hand, every thing is arranged, and my settlements are really noble; but for all that, not so unbounded as my occasions: for you know, O'Brien, it is totally impossible to live in a certain style without a mint of money, and this grand requisite caused the altered arrangement of my plans when I was snatched from England, and the whole plot to be done up.

My

My favouring star surely influenced the Marquis's meditations, for we arrived in Dublin just in time to catch his Grace, as it since proved; my Lord arrested his flying career in the lucky moment he was escaping the scornful looks of some indignant fair, and brought him to me. I had been pondering my horrid embarrassments, devising a variety of futile means to extricate myself, and found it must be ruination to marry Delville, who, poor fellow, is I believe, almost dished; and I really have so much love for him, as to revolt at the idea of involving him still deeper, he having no notion of my enormous debts. I have already been driven to sell my jewels, and substitute paste, but all won't do; I am therefore determined to fix his Grace the first opportune moment, and received him with most Calypso-like arts.

You may suppose, O'Brien, no great *refinement* was necessary to entangle my *sage* Ulysses, and I think I have had a *little practice*. My G—d, what egregious fools the creatures are! When I heard of Delville's arrival, I was a little puzzled how to inform him of the change in my sentiments, but most unaccountably the dear fellow let me off from my engagements with all the obliging readiness imaginable. I told him I had not a few honourable demands in petto, which I had the mortification to find could not be settled so easily as I thought, and compelled me to accept the Duke of L——. Instead of immediately throwing off allegiance, he remained loyal to his vows, and more devoted than ever.

The day is fixed for my commencing Dutcheſs of L——. You will not hear from me again till after that event,

event, when I shall go to Bath. I am sorry you will leave it before my arrival. Why can't you come to me here for a short time first? You would find not a few revolutions among your friends; Mrs. D— is completely done up, and fled to obscurity, heaven knows where. Poor creature! she need not impoverish her finances more by a very distant flight, it is enough to give no more balls, no more concerts, no more any thing that the rest of the world do, to be left undisturbed in her *agreeable* solitude.

Jemmy F—— has been genteelly jockeyed out of his whole estate by his right honourable friend, and now literally drives a common stage vehicle; he must become his *triumphant car* admirably. Miss L—— has a seat in my box at the opera house, and last night made me confidant of a woeful disap-

pointment. George Auburn, who had paid his addressee for some time to her 50,000*l.* suddenly took his leave, and the poor thing is *au desespoir*. It was singular good fortune secured him the succession to his uncle's immense estates, who had been but very lately reconciled to him; his lawyer was by the bedside, and, almost dying, the pen was guided in his hand to sign his altered will.

Mrs. V—— is lately ——, but what signifies her story? The woman is not one of *us*. I am going to Court, and must begin dressing. Adieu, dear O'Brien.

Yours,

BELL STUART.

LET-

LETTER XVI.

EARL OF RAYMOND TO MAJOR DELVILLE.

St. James's-Street.

DEAR GEORGE,

IF I have not written to you so soon as I promised, on your going to Bath, let my present letter atone for the delay, as it infallibly will, when you know how great a sacrifice I make at this time to discharge the debt of friendship, and that every moment my eyes are fixed upon this paper, they are turned from (excepting my Augusta's) two of the finest faces in the universe. It is, however, some consolation to me in reflecting, that while I am thus occupied, I escape some hundred fatal darts from those unerring eyes, and about a thousand deaths from beauty's bewitching power—a

power I never could nor ever shall withstand.

I have now better hopes of success in Portland-Place, than when you left town: Sir Vincent Fitzherbert's death has left Augusta under the guardianship of Lord Mountvillars, who has promised me the influence of his authority, on condition that I forgive him a gaming debt, which amounts to the greatest part of his estate. Have I not then good grounds for hope? But why, you will say, so eager to marry a girl without fortune? I answer, I have fortune sufficient to satisfy avarice itself; and therefore, with so charming a creature for my wife, I shall have the supreme felicity of being envied by all the great and gay of the metropolis. A fine woman, a high-bred horse, and a splendid equipage, form the first of worldly blessings;
and

and possessed of Augusta, that blessing will be mine.

George, if I could but once conquer that inexorable heart of her's, I should be the happiest of mankind.

Oh, 'tis the curse in love, and still approv'd,
When women cannot love where they're belov'd.

But even if her attachment towards me be not of a violent nature, what does it signify? When once we are married, she may pursue pleasure agreeably to her own fancy, for the humour of a wife shall never be a restraint on mine. A certain affair comes now and then across my mind, but I dissipate reflection in a few extraordinary Bacchanalian libations.

I have just bought a new horse, which I think will ensure my success on the turf. I may venture to pro-

nounce my young Eclipse the best horse in Christendom. Adieu.

Thine,

RAYMOND.

LETTER XVII.

THE HON. FREDERICK DASHWOOD

TO

THE HON. HENRY MOUNTVILLARS.

Bond-Street.

DEAR MOUNTVILLARS,

WHEN I think of the time that must intervene before this can reach your hands, I do not hesitate in prefacing it with a repetition of the sentiments of regard and esteem that are ever uppermost in my thoughts when addressing you. I think I am not chargeable with vanity in declaring the high opinion I entertain of the increased value which distance and absence

fence confer on friendship; and I flatter myself, therefore, this small testimony of the faithful continuance of mine will impart to you a satisfaction equal to what I should receive from a similar favour. Though I have done my utmost to lead life so pleasantly, as to forget all the evils and misfortunes of a “mortal born to bear,” still I find cause to make me daily more sensible of your absence, which I ever reckoned no small calamity. I know no one but yourself to whom I could lay open the undisguised feelings of my heart, particularly as the circumstances of your own will incline you to indulgence; I therefore venture, Mountvillars, to entrust you with the hitherto undivulged secret, that your friend is no longer the infidel in love you have suspected; for I am now too well convinced, that the all-powerful little God has kindled the latent sparks
of

of passion in my breast with a force death only can subdue. The charming object of my passion is no other than your lovely cousin, Augusta Fitzherbert : you, surely, have never seen her, or I should long since have known and admired her even by description ; for you could not have been so insensible, as to behold such excellence unmoved. Thank Heaven your affections are now devoted—on your life, then, behold her not with the eyes I do?—Yet what do I talk of ? Are you not fettered at that immense distance I hourly lament ?—Already I betray the inconsistent folly of a lover ; and how indubitably must I acknowledge myself as one when I attempt her description ! But say what you will, I cannot forego the pleasure of delineating the beautiful Augusta, and at the same time justify my attachment as entirely in your opinion as my own. Her complexion is the finest
I ever

I ever beheld ; her eyes well shaped, of " Heaven's own tint," fringed with long brown lashes ; but to give you an idea of their expression is beyond the power of my pen ; they are illumined with every sentiment of an elegant and polished mind ; faithful to its varying emotion, they sparkle with brilliancy uncommon, or assume the softest insinuating languor ; her features seem the model of those exquisite ideas of beauty that guided the pencil of Apelles ; her figure is rather tall, but in justice, I must speak poetically, it is

——The faultless form
Shap'd by the hand of harmony.

The first sight of this assemblage of charms convinced me I possessed a heart sensibly alive to their united power ; but my fate must inevitably prove the wretched doom of hopeless love, condemned to eternal silence, I fear, by
insue-

insurmountable obstacles ; for I disdain a treacherous attempt to gain her affections, without the hope of ever calling her mine, and endangering her future happiness for the selfish joy of gaining that inestimable heart.

My Lord Raymond has given me a fatal proof of his taste and judgment, by offering her his hand, which has met with approbation so warmly from Lord Mountvillars, that he urges her acceptance with pressing importunity. You will join with me in lamenting her situation, when I inform you she has been left his ward by her father, Sir Vincent Fitzherbert, who is lately dead. You are too well acquainted with the arbitrary, unrelenting temper of his Lordship, not to allow my fears but too well founded of her falling a victim to his tyrannic power ; she evidently disapproves of my brother, but
that

that does not discourage his addressees, thus powerfully sanctioned. Their two Lordships are inseparable friends, and so alike in disposition, I look forward with inexpressible anxiety to the fatal event, that must for ever blast the future prospects of my life. Yet, should the lovely Augusta's entreaties prevail upon them to give up their scheme—I dare not allow the flatterer hope admittance to my breast—Fortune has equally frowned on both—— Mine is a pittance too humble to allow a step that, perhaps, might give me the wish of my heart; and I learn the termination of Sir Vincent's law-suit has deprived his charming daughter of the brilliant expectations she was born to, and leaves her dependent on the will of Lord Mountvillars for the trifling remains of her once noble fortune, which is all forfeited, if she marries without his consent. Now do I re-

pine

pine from my soul at that scanty portion which I have hitherto found sufficient for my wants. Riches have now acquired a value in my estimation they never before possessed. How insupportable, that the want of them should have power to stifle, as too frequently happens, the noblest faculty of the mind !

I am now so completely lost, even in the midst of my friends and acquaintances, that I find no scene of pleasure or repose but the drawing-room in Portland-Place ; and whenever away, my invention is busied in forming pretences for visiting there as often as possible, without the risque of its being particularly remarked. The obliging attention, and unmerited partiality, Lady Mountvillars honours me with, gains me admittance and opportunity favourable to my wishes. She appears
to

to regard Miss Fitzherbert with a warmth of affection superior, allow me to say, my dear Mountvillars, to her own daughter, who is certainly very dissimilar from either her cousin or amiable mother, and has, perhaps, more strongly imbibed the fashionable manners and sentiments of the times, than the engaging and endearing qualities of her sex.

I went a few days since to Lord M——'s, and on my entrance, found her Ladyship and Miss Fitzherbert alone. Their countenances wore evident marks of a conversation interesting and painful, and we insensibly fell into subjects more of the former kind than the usual topics of discussion. They are both women of accomplished and highly cultivated minds: the justness of sentiment, and traits of feeling they discovered, convinced me, that
though

though so unequal in point of years, they are companions that can never fail to be delighted with, and endeared to each other. The pleasure this knowledge afforded me was my only idea of comfort, when Lady Mountvillars informed me of the persecution and distress Miss Fitzherbert suffered from my brother's persisting in his addresses, and requested my endeavours to persuade his Lordship to give over an application so disagreeable, and so productive of disquietude to the family, as her Ladyship expresses herself decidedly resolved to support her beloved niece in rejecting Lord Raymond, notwithstanding she may thereby incur the displeasure of Lord M. The lovely Augusta herself joined in the request, and, while her beautiful cheek was suffused with a faint blush, said, "I shall ever think myself greatly obliged to Mr. Dashwood could he succeed in
freeing

freeing me from any farther attentions from my Lord Raymond ; they are unspeakably disagreeable and painful : I make no doubt his Lordship might elsewhere find many women, who would be highly flattered by his preference ; and his Lordship must be perfectly assured my sentiments will never alter."

" It would give me," I replied, " greater happiness than I can express, to render the smallest service where my admiration and esteem are so powerfully engaged."

Lady Mountvillars hinted, that she feared his Lordship would be too inflexible to resign his wish of seeing his ward become Lady Raymond ; and their only hope of averting that event was by prevailing on his Lordship to withdraw his addresses.

I was

I was obliged to declare how uncor-dial we had ever been, and that I dreaded the success of my efforts in their cause. Our little party was soon afterwards broke up by the return of Miss Mountvillars from her visits; she looked at all with an inquisitive countenance not very expressive of good humour, and curtsied to me very coolly. I apprehend I am no favourite of hers, and sitting down by her cousin, she exclaimed, " Lord! Augusta, you always look so dismal, its horrid to see you, but I suppose its to harmonize your features with this black dress; don't you think it is very becoming, Mr. Dashwood?" The tear of poignant feeling started to her eye at this inconsiderate speech, to give it no harsher name.

Forgive me, Mountvillars, for mentioning a circumstance so unfavourable to your sister, but filled with the deepest

est concern for every thing that affects the peace of Augusta, resentment will involuntarily flow from my pen. I am now permitted to interest myself for her, and dread to think how it may influence my conduct, and rouse to ardour ungovernable, the passion I had meant to stifle in my own breast. I can spare you no more time at present, but only to solicit your pardon if I no more entertain you with my former subjects.

“The rage of nations and the crush of states” appear inanimating trivial objects to this so intimately connected with my peace, so wholly occupying the thoughts of your

FREDERIC DASHWOOD.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO MISS CONWAY.

Portland Place.

OH my Matilda ! my situation grows daily more unpleasant, and what still adds to my disquiet is, I fear, that best of women Lady Mountvillars, with your friend, incurs the anger of Lord M——, who appears still more bent on seeing me the wretched wife of Lord Raymond.

We have been lately to visit the O'Briens, who are come to make a short stay in town ; how cruel, my Matilda, to be obliged to visit and appear complaisant to those who so unjustly deprive me of my birth-right ! how hard is my fate ! and surely from the hourly uneasiness I have, life would be insupportable, but for the tenderness of
my

my beloved aunt and my Matilda. Mrs. O'Brien is now (the Dutchess of L—— having left town) the inseparable companion of Miss Mountvillars, and I can perceive them in a confederacy to destroy the peace of your friend. They took a malicious pleasure last night, on seeing me in conversation with Mr. Dashwood, as I leaned over the chair of Lady Mountvillars who was at cards, to come up arm in arm and interrupt us, Miss M—— saying, “Indeed, Augusta, I fear you will be fatigued with standing such an immense time, Mr. Dashwood must have been vastly entertaining.” I think (added Mrs. O'Brien) I read Miss Fitzherbert's thoughts :

“With thee conversing, I forget all time.”

They both laughed at our mutual embarrassment ; Mr. Dashwood coloured,

and a little chagrined was about to reply, had not miss M—— stopt him by observing, “There is in the next room the nicest *tete-à-tete* sofa imaginable, and quite retired, I assure you, though if I was Lord Raymond, I own I should be a little jealous ; but you change colour, Augusta, are you not well ?” I was exceedingly hurt thus to be made the object of attention to the whole room, nor do I know how far they might have carried their ridiculous behaviour, had not a friend of Lady Mountvillars opportunely come to my relief ; this lady, a Miss St. Aubyn, is very amiable, about thirty, remarkably sensible and clever, and greatly attached to my aunt ; she is lively, and her wit is tempered with so much good humour that she is really a delightful companion. Miss St. Aubyn having been abroad, and accustomed to the best company, her manners are easy, and she possesses

possesses a thorough knowledge of life : in short she seems, equally formed to enhance the enjoyments of a public or private station.

Such is the bosom friend of my dear aunt, a title which, independent of her own merits, cannot fail to ensure my respect and esteem. I found comfort and pleasure in her society, which I had the good fortune to engross the remainder of the evening, and should have returned home rather relieved from that depression of spirits which continually attends me, had it not been for the malice of Miss Mountvillars and Mrs. OB'rien, who contrived to send Lord Raymond and myself in the same carriage, alone ; the indignation and chagrin that by turns oppressed my mind I cannot easily express. In going to the carriage Mr. Dashwood, who was near me, took my hand to conduct

me to it ; at that moment his Lordship came up, and snatched it with anger. I endeavoured to pull my hand away, “ surely my Lord, you do not presume to think you have a greater right to the hand of Augusta Fitzherbert ?” he made no answer, but followed me into the carriage, which instantly drove off. I cried vehemently to stop for Lady Mountvillers, but Lord R——, with an insufferable boldness, put his hand before my mouth, saying, “ hush, hush, my dear Augusta ! Lady M—— is following us ; be for once kind, and listen to the vows of your adoring Raymond ; you will never grant me the happiness of your company *toute seule*, I was therefore compelled to this little stratagem, to avail myself of a few moments to beg you to consider that my happiness and life depend upon you. Why is my charming girl so inflexible ! yet say, my lovely Augusta,

it

it is perhaps the bands of Hymen (which when once entered death only can break) that frighten you? if so, then be kind, my enchantress, and let us live in bliss which angels might envy, connected by the soft bonds of love." "Good G—d (I replied in agitation which almost overpowered me) has my conduct, my Lord, authorized you thus to dare to insult me"—Exhausted by grief I could say no more, and what he added I know not. The instant we arrived at Lord Mountvillars's, I flew to my room, whither Lady M—— soon followed. I clasped her in my arms, and reposed all my cares in her maternal bosom. "Oh! my dear aunt, my mother, do you not pity me? why am I so cruelly treated?" "Yes, my beloved child, I feel every pang that rends the heart of my Augusta, nothing on earth shall move the friendship and sincere affection I vow-

ed to my dear brother ; I will entreat and pray Lord Mountvillars to alter his rash resolve ; surely he cannot be acquainted with the base sentiments of his favourite, who is unworthy of a niece like his ; do not despair, my love, for Heaven will take part with worth and innocence like yours." After a thousand tender and soothing expressions, she left me, and I then sought on my pillow to forget those melancholy thoughts which obtrude continually upon my mind, and which have long since usurped the place of those dear departed guests, serenity and happiness ; but " nature's sweet restorer" came not to me, he shuns the wretched, and

" Swift on his downy pinions flies from woe
" And lights on lids unfully'd with a tear."

I therefore sought this only comfort, writing to my Matilda, and pouring
my

my sorrows into her friendly bosom. I am now summoned to breakfast ; adieu my Matilda, may your prospects brighten in proportion as those of your Augusta sadden !

CONTINUATION.

Oh Matilda, what will become of your wretched friend ? how shall I describe the scene I have just gone through ? On entering the breakfast room I perceived my dear aunt in tears, and Lord Mountvillars walking about in a violent passion ; Miss M—— endeavouring to hide her inward satisfaction under the false appearance of pity, a sentiment to which her heart is an utter stranger. Addressing Lord M—— I intreated him to hear me for a few minutes ; with a stern look he replied, “ you need not give yourself the trouble, madam, I know what you would

say ; Lord Raymond has my full leave to use what means he thinks proper to make you become Lady Raymond—remember, Miss Fitzherbert, that without my approbation you can never marry, unless you make yourself a beggar, and that assure yourself no one will ever have but Lord Raymond ; and I suppose you know also that scanty pittance of your's in my care is not sufficient to support you without *work*, unless under my roof. I now warn you that, unless you consent to marry Lord Raymond, I shall not afford you protection one hour beyond your coming of age : remember obedience is my due, or take the consequence." At that instant Lord R—— entering, I shuddered at his presence. " Oh ! my lord," cried I, " if the tears of your niece, whom once you honoured with your regard, and the misery or happiness of whose life depends upon you, can move your heart,

heart, let them now speak for me; never till now have I disobeyed you, but never, oh ! my Lord, pardon me, never can I consent to marry a man who"—he stopped me "Recall your words, madam—give me your hand." Take it, my Lord, nothing shall alter my fixed resolution." What has occasioned this disobedience to my commands ? what reason can you give for your dislike ? are your heart and your affections engaged ? speak madam."—Lord Raymond with hauteur said "if any dare dispute my sanctioned claim to your affections, madam, by G— this arm shall rid me of him—as to Mr. Dashwood, who has dared to remonstrate with an elder brother, I shall teach him for the future to be less officious, and more cautious how he intermeddles in my affairs."—"I am truly sorry that Mr. Dashwood's generous compassion has involved him in any

displeasure. Had you not, my Lord, cruelly persisted"—“Come, come, my destined bride, forget all that’s past, and let us look forward to happiness”—“Never with you, my lord, never will I”—Lord Mountvillars came up with a menacing air that terrified me: “Girl, I insist on your immediate consent to give your hand to Lord Raymond, as soon as the marriage articles are finished, which are now preparing with all expedition”—“Hear me, Lord Mountvillars, said Lady M——, obedience I have ever practised as your wife, nor can you charge me with one thing in which I have disputed your will; but now, my Lord, in so important a point as the happiness of my dear niece, I can no longer forbear to assert my own power in whatever concerns her”—“By G—, said Lord Mountvillars, it is not to be borne; go, madam, take your niece; another time shall

shall thoroughly rid me of that obstinate girl, retire"—we did. Oh, Matilda! how severe were my reflections, that by my unhappy fate the best of aunts incurred the displeasure of her lord! and o! my friend, who knows what inconvenience and vexation I may have been the unfortunate cause of to the generous Dashwood—but pardon me, Matilda, I fear this scene will depress your spirits almost as much as those of your unhappy friend. I will therefore close it, and beg my Matilda to pity her

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT.

LETTER XIX.

THE DUCHESS OF L—— TO MRS. O'BRIEN.

Bath.

I AM almost tired of this place, Helen, and shall, I believe, soon return to town, at least as soon as our house in Portman Square is ready to receive us; the furniture the Duke had chosen was so horribly ugly, I have ordered it to be entirely changed. Had I been doomed to drag out life in a lower sphere, no consideration upon earth should have driven me to marry a fool; no punishment of Tartarus could inflict such excruciating torture, as the constant company of a fool, a fond officious fool too. Thank G—d, my style of life gives the power of avoiding him as much as I please; the very sight of
him

him is the bane of my gaiety, his absurdity fidgets me completely out of humour, spoils my looks, and really made me appear so perfect a fright in a delicious new dress I wore last night, that I have thrown it away in a fit of disgust, fearing it would infect me with the same *laideur* again. Delville is the only being here that gives some air of pleasure to the routine and amusements; for there is absolutely but two or three people of fashion remaining. I was in the rooms last night for a quarter of an hour from Mrs. ——'s party, and was so elbowed by a parcel of new made quality, fine dressed misses, vulgar old women, and staring men, that I did not attempt dancing, as I had promised Delville. I should inevitably have been torn in pieces, and my scattered fragments been gathered up by some needy fists, to adorn their appearance the next opportunity. I had
a little

a little *soupe* the other night, when among the rest of my set was Mrs. H——, her four grown up daughters, and their three poor cousins; mere lumber—but I was obliged to ask them once; the latter are so silent, so inanimate and so modest, they are only fit for the country, the proper place for such beings: the others rushed upon me in full covey, all assurance and impertinence, asking a million of questions; a striking contrast to be sure—I took shelter at the cribbage table, and had the *good fortune* to lose 16 guineas, but it was to Delville; no matter, I must assist the poor fellow's pocket, he is almost always unlucky. My precious relation, Lady Mary K—— gave me a grand ball and supper a few nights since, she is an old maid near fifty, sometimes a dowdy figure too bad to be noticed, but on high days

“ Her

“ Her grizzl'd locks assume a smirking grace,
And Art has levell'd her deep furrow'd face.”

She is a great admirer of the arts, no small proficient in many of them, and extremely vain of her performances, which she exhibits perpetually, and that evening had just hung up a new piece of drawing. She called Delville and Sir James B--- to look at it, and holding the candle to it, said, (as some excuse she meant for having executed the little nudity with more *accuracy* than *decency*) “ Oh ! we don't mind these things in the arts,” *affectedly* lisping, though, poor devil, I won't charge her with a failing she is naturally, I believe, exempt from ; it is *necessity* compels her to be particularly cautious when she opens her little squeezed up mouth, for fear of dislodging her whole stock of teeth, and distorting her stiff visage into unnatural dimples. I have
adopted

adopted the *convenient elevation* of a
bad, O'Brien, upon my life the inven-
tor merits a pension ; I know some of
my friends have found it of such con-
sequence, that *entre nous*, they have
positively verified this line,

“ Till seeming blest, they grow to what they
seem.”

I am going with Delville to chuse
the colour of my rouge, you know he
has a charming taste. Adieu.

L——.

LETTER XX

MISS CONWAY TO MISS FITZHERBERT.

Pall Mall.

MY Augusta will be surprised, and
I flatter myself pleased, to hear
that her Matilda is in Nottinghamshire.
We

We are under the necessity of leaving Bath, Mr. C——'s presence being greatly wanted at his estate. I indulge myself in the pleasing expectation of soon seeing my dear friend, as the summer advances rapidly, and Mountvillar's park, I find, is but three miles from hence. Oh that the time I have so long, so ardently wished, was arrived, that my Augusta and I, after a long six years absence, may enjoy in unconstrained converse, each fond emotion of our hearts, and in mourning over the sorrow of her friend, each may awhile suspend her own. I fear, my beloved friend, that your health has suffered greatly under a constant agitation of mind. I entreat you to take care of yourself, Having so lately answered all your interesting letters, I shall forbear saying more at present on the subject of them, trusting we shall so soon meet, and enjoy frequent opportunities

of talking over every little incident that concerns my Augusta's happiness. I find great relief from the quietness of the country; the time was when I sighed for the pleasures of gaiety and town dissipation, but then it was when my Augusta and I could say, "Gay hope was ours," &c. Alas! how changed my prospects! but I will not obtrude on you my melancholy thoughts, though I can truly say, low spirits are my constant companions; they get up with me, go to bed with me, and attend me every where. I will endeavour, however, when you come, to dismiss them, like the fate of all other humble companions, and that it may be soon, is the sincere wish of your faithful

MITILDA CONWAY.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO MISS CONWAY.

Portland Place.

I AM scarcely able to write, my dear Matilda, my spirits have this morning received so unexpected, so severe a shock, I am almost unable to collect my thoughts to relate all that has passed, so circumstantially as I know you desirous to receive from your friend. Returning from an airing, which my dear aunt had proposed, in the hope of calming my spirits by the enjoyment of a quiet walk in Kensington gardens, which had greatly contributed, with her soothing society, to compose them sufficiently to endure joining the rest of the family to Ranelagh; we were on a sudden alarmed with the sight of
Lord

Lord Mounvillars; his countenance appeared inflamed with rage, and walking quickly towards his house, as the carriage drove on to Portland Place, he glanced a look of gratified revenge on seeing the victims of his temper hastening to meet their fate; he waited our coming at the door, but without deigning to advance and offer his hand. I trembled so violently, my dear aunt took my arm in hers, and led me into the house. "Follow me" cried his Lordship, when, as soon as we reached his room, he flung the door together, "What has caused this anger my Lord?" said Lady M——, "for heaven's sake moderate it, or you will overwhelm my Augusta with terror," for I still could scarcely support myself. "She cannot suffer equal to her folly," replied Lord M——, "her absurd conduct and obstinacy, has been the cause of an affair so dreadful in its consequences,

sequences, and already productive of I know not what mischief; would to G—d her father had been a thousand miles off when he thought of making me her guardian ! But since I am cursed with the d—n'd trouble, the least she can do is to give up her idle notions to my authority; she has involved me in inextricable difficulties.” “ What do you mean, my Lord ?” said Lady M——, sinking with apprehension into the chair against which I leaned; but the cruel wretch, notwithstanding he saw her suffer all the tortures of suspense, went on, pacing up and down the room. “ I know not where it will end, perhaps, at this moment the very worst may have happened.” On his saying this, a gleam of joy darted through my mind, Lord Raymond is dead, thought I, but turning suddenly round to me with a fierce look, “ Have you the d—d assurance to
persist

persist in your stubborn refusal of Lord Raymond? and have you the folly to hope (with a malicious grin) that your pretty airs or your protectress here (glancing the look of a fiend at my dear aunt) can frustrate my intentions? No, no, depend upon it, they shall not be defeated." Leaning my head upon my hand, and covering my face with my handkerchief, I articulated as well as my tears would permit me, "Oh, my dear father! you never would have treated me so cruelly; would to heaven I had died before your irreparable loss had taught me what affliction was, and doomed me to this misery!" Exasperated with the last expression, "Then, by heaven, said he, since you complain already of my treatment, madam, and of my care to procure you affluence and rank, instead of leaving you to the indigence that awaits your conduct, you shall have more cause for your whin-

ing ; (in a muttering voice and continuing his walk) but I must take care of my own affairs, G—d knows what the consequences may be.”—Seeing him about to leave the room, “ Stop Lord Mountvillars,” cried my dear aunt, “ tell me what has happened.” “ That girl, he replied, has been the occasion of a duel between Lord Raymond and that conceited puppy, Dashwood, but he has gained his deserts, I believe he is killed.” Oh G—d ! I screamed, and sunk on the floor. I recovered in Miss Mountvillars’s arms ; unable to speak, I attempted to walk to the door, and was supported to my room. Lord M——, I fancy, left the house as soon as he pronounced the dreadful intelligence that bereft me of my senses. What will become of me, my Matilda, if Dashwood has indeed fallen the sacrifice of his generous interposition for me ? I dread to own how deeply
sorrow

sorrow for his loss would wound my heart ; seek not to discover to me, my friend, how wretched my indiscreet attention to Mr. Dashwood's worth and engaging manners has rendered your Augusta ; I will not suffer my pen to transcribe thoughts that imply what I blush to own to my In this distracting uncertainty of his welfare I cannot endure the prospect of going into public to night ; to be obliged to assume a countenance so foreign to my aching heart. I must lay down my pen a few moments, conflicting thoughts overpower me beyond my strength to restrain.

CONTINUATION.

I intended to have finished my letter to you, my dear Matilda, yesterday ; but to begin—Miss Mountvillars came to enquire how I did, just after I had
laid

laid down my pen ; she informed me my dear aunt had reposed herself upon her bed, too unwell to follow me as she had wished, " But how ridiculous is this, Augusta, continued she, to be fainting and ill with every trifle, why are you so positive in your refusal of my Lord ? I am sure it is a very fortunate hit for you ; only think how you will be reduced, if you do not consent to marry him. As for the duel, it is well it is no worse ; my Lord has escaped, thank heaven, and it will keep that impertinent Dashwood out of the way for sometime at least ; he is wounded, I hear, whether dangerously or not I cannot tell." To this unfeeling speech I only replied, " I am too ill to talk with you, Harriet, our sentiments are always so different on every subject, I cannot support the contest now, and must go and visit my dear aunt : I am truly grieved at being the cause

of so much disquietude to her."—In going, I overheard Lord Mountvillars talking loudly in her dressing room, and glad to escape encountering him again, returned to my room. In passing, Harriet said, "I shan't intrude upon your solitude again, Lady Mountvillars sent me now ; if you cry so much it will alter your looks, which will really be a misfortune to you, and perhaps you will have something more worth crying about ; I assure you they have not appeared *improved* by it of late." I shut the door before she had finished her speech, which doubtless offended her highly. Lady M—— sent me a message soon after to dress for a dinner party and Ranelagh. I reluctantly obeyed, though convinced that my dear aunt would not have forced me into company, at a time so peculiarly unpleasant, could she have avoided it. —On going into the drawing room, which I delayed as long as possible, I

found a number of gentlemen assembled together, with Lord and Lady Mountvillars, and Miss St. Aubyn; Harriet was near the door, talking and laughing at some satirical story those young men were telling her; as soon as she saw me, she pulled my gown, calling out "Here is a feat Augusta," with intention to prevent my going up to Lady M—— and her party, which she knew would be more agreeable to me. You will easily imagine how irksome was this situation, in which I was obliged to be contented to remain, surrounded by young men who stunned my ears with such volubility of common place nonsense and trifling occurrences, that I scarcely knew how to listen to with the politeness indispensable. To add to her malice, Miss Mountvillars asked one of them, where my Lord Raymond was flown to? "Augusta, you cannot have a glimpse of

him to night."—A gentleman, standing near, of an elegant appearance, said, "I hope to God this unfortunate affair will not deprive us of so valuable a young man as Frederic Dashwood, I know no one whose loss would be so deservedly lamented,"—this little eulogy gave me an emotion of grateful pleasure towards this stranger, who paid so just a tribute to his worth; though the cause that suggested it was so painful a recollection, I could hardly summon composure enough to reply to the same gentleman, who immediately addressed himself to me upon some indifferent topic: he was sensible and agreeable, and greatly relieved the unpleasantness of my seat, by freeing me of the insipid mirth and attention of the rest around me; he placed himself next me at table; and appeared assiduous to render himself as agreeable in my opinion as he really seemed to merit.

Lord

Lord Mountvillars spoke no more to me than a constrained ceremony required, and I was really glad to return to the drawing-room, where I could enjoy the pleasure of improving and agreeable conversation.

Harriet, who takes no pleasure in quiet female parties of this description, left us, on pretence of altering her dress, before the arrival of some of her acquaintances, who were to join our Ranelagh party.

Lady Mountvillars said she had sent to Dashwood's lodgings, to enquire after him, and learnt that no danger was at present apprehended, but that the wound would confine him some time to his apartment. "Thank Heaven he is safe!" exclaimed I, with an eagerness of satisfaction, which in so particular a manner fixed her Ladyship's
G 3 attention

attention upon me, as to suffuse my cheeks with blushes, that left her no room to doubt the genuine feelings of my heart.

We did not see some of the gentlemen till they quitted the dining-room to hand us into the carriages, when their appearance discovered their Bacchanalian libations to have been copious, but which had given to Mr. Pelham (the gentleman I before mentioned) a degree of animation extremely improving: he accompanied Lady Mountvillars, Miss St. Aubyn and myself. I felt the most melancholy ideas arising as I entered that scene of gaiety, it being the first time of my appearing in public since my late fatal loss.

Harriet was in uncommon spirits, and flirted much too freely with young men highly inebriated. I walked arm
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in arm with Miss St. Aubyn and her Ladyship, and Mr. Pelham attached himself to me the whole time we were there; his remarks, and amusing anecdotes of the parties we met, dissipated, in some degree, my mournful thoughts. Stopping to speak to some people we knew, seated next to a box filled with a convivial party, I heard my name pronounced, in a sneering manner as I imagined, by the re-echoed laugh that succeeded, and observed that it came from the Duchess of L——, who was surveying me with great boldness, and making her remarks to Delville, the constant dangler of her Grace,

She appears to be one of those women, who vainly thinking themselves secure of admiration, commit a thousand negligences, so highly disadvantageous to them, that they lose the little esteem they before enjoyed. The

Duke was enclosed in a party of men at the box door, wholly excluding himself from a glimpse of the free manners of his fashionable wife. She is undoubtedly handsome, and a very striking figure, but without delicacy or softness: the rouges immensely high, though, indeed, not with a higher bloom than the numberless full-blown roses around her. But my attention was soon called off from her Grace to two gentlemen who were talking near us. "Why," said the one, "if she does not marry Raymond, Lord Mountvillars will soon turn her adrift, and her purse is not abundantly stored; what then will become of her high-bred spirit and gaudy retinue? The fair fugitive may be easily obtained by some thoughtless Knight errant, who may take pity on her distress: I should think myself a fortunate fellow were she to fall in my way." Of the other's reply,

reply, I could only distinguish these words—"The rival brothers have created an interesting topic; Dashwood was a generous fellow, or his Lordship might have started a long run by this time:" then turning away, rejoined, "Heaven! is not that Miss F——? look at the sweetmeat," with a loud laugh at the filly conceit of their witty remark.

Nothing worth relating passed, till, on talking of leaving town in a few days, Mr. Pelham exclaimed, "So soon will you rob us of your charming company! What a set of dismal, unfociable creatures will you leave behind?—If society is any alleviation to misery, we have a noble set to afford consolation for the grief we feel from the pangs of disappointment. Poor Dashwood! I shall dread to give him this intelligence."

This hint awakened in my mind ideas never before imagined there; and I will acknowledge they were accompanied with sensations of pleasure too delightful to be instantly dismissed;—yet it was but a slender foundation for encouraging the hope that Dashwood—but I will not allow my pen to go farther; though, is it not allowable, my dear friend, to wish the good opinion of those who have engaged our esteem, especially now that every sentiment of gratitude is so powerfully excited towards him? How much is he possibly enduring at this moment, in circumstances full of present uneasiness, and, perhaps, future trouble, upon my account.

I have received your welcome letters, and more joy they have given me than I can express, from the pleasing prospect they give of speedily pressing
to

to my bosom the friend of my heart. I look forward with anxiety and impatience for that happy time : it gives a lightness and elevation to my spirits to which they have long been a stranger. When we meet, I have a thousand things to communicate, which I find myself incapable of conveying by this letter.

Adieu, my dear girl ; another week will restore you to

Your affectionate

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT.

LETTER XXII.

HON. FREDERICK DASHWOOD TO THE HON.
HENRY MOUNTVILLARS.

Bond-street.

DEAR MOUNTVILLARS,

THREE weeks since I had given up all hope of ever experiencing again the satisfaction of writing to you, and had consoled my departing spirit (as I had full cause for thinking it) with a hope of the pleasing employment of attending the steps of those I love, with guardian care to ward the adverse strokes of Fate, or, at least, with soothing influence to blunt the keen edge of every woe that "black misfortune's baleful train" inflicts upon human life, to embitter its transitory existence.

I am

I am at this moment so far from recovery, as to be lying in an invalid state upon a sofa, rendered such by a bullet from the *brotherly* hand of Lord Raymond. Am I not persecuted by Fortune? Nothing could have added so greatly to the mortification and distraction I suffer from the failure of my utmost exertions in behalf of the lovely Augusta, but the dread of having aggravated her disquietude by this unfortunate consequence; a thousand concurrent circumstances made this affair unavoidable, though no heat of resentment could expunge in my breast the feelings of natural feeling and the dictates of conscience; nor did I meet his Lordship in the field without a previous determination to return guiltless of the fatal deed his rashness might have led me to commit. Imagining his own hand had been as unerring as he intended it to be, his Lordship left me

to be raised by the gentlemen who attended us, and pursued the usual method of insuring personal safety, an object of infinite importance in his estimation.

But I must check my pen, lest the acrimony of yet unextinguished anger should flow from it; for that is a licence, in my opinion, derogatory to the feelings of a generous heart; tho' I confess myself more inclined to transgress the maxim of pardoning injuries than acquiring self-applause by guiding my conduct according to its dictates, as inclination has hitherto accustomed me.

Eager to avail myself of the opportunity of being serviceable to the charming Augusta, I assailed his Lordship with every argument that could affect, or motive that could induce him to forbear

bear

bear destroying her peace and happiness. After several conferences of this kind, an altercation ensued, which compelled me to accept the challenge he had the madness to give. How insupportable is this confinement, at a time when I dread the utmost efforts of his malice and revenge will be employed to gain the object of his determined cruelty!

I hear the family are gone to Mount-villars Park ; perhaps his Lordship has followed them ; I distract myself with apprehensions of what may ensue. With impatience not to be restrained, I went to Portland-Place a few days after the accident, which caused my longer confinement by a severe fever, and had the mortification not to find them at home ; but, at the same time, learnt their intention of soon leaving town. In hopes of hearing something of Augusta,

gusta, I went in search of such of my friends as I knew to be intimate there ; and finding Pelham, he gratified me by the relation of a number of little interesting circumstances in which she was concerned. “ I wish, Dashwood,” continued he, “ you would teach me the happy art of ingratiating myself as completely with the women as you appear to be master of, those I mean who are worth the trouble of pleasing, and such there are I have no longer the audacity to doubt, since Fortune has favoured me with the acquaintance of Miss Fitzherbert ; her apparent coldness I verily believe you have found the envied happiness of subduing, and gained an entrance to the avenues of her heart ; at least, I shall suspect my penetration failed me most critically, if it was not a gentle movement of the blind God that gave a most bewitching glow to her sweet face, when I mentioned:

tioned you to her unexpectedly, with a few encomiums; I wish you joy, Dashwood, of a prize the most valuable, in my opinion, Fortune could bestow."

Can I, my friend, credit the justness of his discovery? I never yet presumed to flatter myself that her condescending attention to me, and the sweet grace with which she received my endeavours to amuse and dissipate her melancholy, as any thing more than the result of her amiable temper and elegance of manners; nor can I allow myself even now to cherish the fond idea. I have beguiled some of my tedious hours by attempting to draw her picture from memory, and after numberless disappointments have succeeded; it shall be my constant companion, and reside in my bosom upon that heart, which beats alone for the beloved original.

ginal. The kindness of my literary friends, which has ever till now afforded me such infinite delight, has pestered me with society my mind ill accords with at present.

I had given Saunders leave to go into Nottinghamshire to see his relations; his absence was a loss to me at this period, so excellent a nurse have I found him. I think this servant is not unknown to you; he is the person whose skill and care preserved my life, when far from all other aid, I was pursuing the unconquerable desire I had imbibed from the invaluable companions of my College days, to visit the pristine seats of literature and arts, and tread the hallowed walks of classic ground; but he has amply compensated me for the inconveniences I sustained through his trip, by procuring intelligence of the adored August; but I will give it you
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in his own words.—“ I went to Mountvillars Park, which is only three miles from my home, to see a cousin who is just gone to live there ; he told me that Lord Raymond was there, that Miss Fitzherbert was always accompanied by his Lordship, and that both him and Lord Mountvillars seemed very watchful that she never escaped long from their sight ; there was often words between my Lady and him, and they seem to have some suspicion a scheme is going forward, as one of the grooms was dispatched with a letter to a clergyman the day before. I saw Miss Fitzherbert the morning I came away, riding with a young lady through our village, and happened to pass them just as the lady was dismounting ; her horse gave a violent start, tore the bridle from the servant's hand, and galloped off ; I saved her from a dreadful fall, by throwing myself in
her

way to break its force, when staring at me with wonder, she exclaimed, "Good God, Saunders, is it you? Where is your master? Is he near? Don't you know me? Don't you remember living with us at Florence, about two years since, a short time after our marriage, at which you were present?" Seeing me look at her with surprize, she said; "Are not you Mr. Dashwood's servant?"—"Yes, Madam, I live with the Honourable Mr. Dashwood, but I don't remember seeing you before, and my master is not married."

Miss Fitzherbert, who had been speaking to an old woman at one of the cottages, now came up, and cried out in surprize, "My dear Matilda, has any thing happened, that you look so ill?"—"And, Sir," observing me, whom she recollected having seen before in Portland-Place, when I once
carried

carried a note from you to Lady Mountvillars, "pray," said she, in a timid voice, "how is Mr. Dashwood?"— I could not inform her, Sir, for I only heard the account of your illness at Mountvillars Park the day before."—"Good Heaven," said the Lady, "I cannot be mistaken; come, Augusta, let us go on; I will inform you of my surprize."—They turned into Mr. C——'s grounds; I cannot guess what she could mean; certainly, I thought to myself, she takes me for my cousin Will Saunders, for they say we are very much alike."

When once he has leave to talk, it is no easy matter to stop his volubility—there seems some mystery hanging over the business, and I almost tremble for the devellopement. I am not too without the greatest apprehensions for the fate of my beloved Augusta—Mine

did I say!—No, never, never, shall I be blest—Warm as my wishes are, I cannot, nay, I dare not so much encourage hope.

Oh, Mountvillars, how much do I wish for your company at this present conjuncture; what comfort and assistance might I derive from your friendly advice!—I fervently hope your next letter, which I trust you will not delay time in sending, will inform me of your return. Farewel.

Believe me ever your's,

FREDERICK DASHWOOD.

LETTER

LETTER XXIII.

EARL OF RAYMOND TO MAJOR DELVILLE.

Mountvillars-Park.

BY this time, dear George, you are in town; how unlucky was it that you should be absent when that cursed duel happened between Dashwood and me, which I suppose has made talk enough. The Town was growing quiet and dull, and this will give a fresh fillip to the people's tongues, and afford ample matter for disputation and remark.

Was it to be borne!—a younger brother, a conceited, sentimental coxcomb, to argue with me on the propriety of my conduct and affairs!—Monstrous audacity! but he is punish-
ed

ed as he deserved ; for I understand his situation requires that he should be some time longer confined to his chamber ; and I believe before he can possibly venture abroad, his hopes, if ever he presumed to entertain any (for I suppose he is really in love with the girl) will be finally frustrated, Lord Mountvillars and I having concerted a plan, which we mean instantly to put into execution, and that is no other than to compel Augusta into the marriage, if she will not voluntarily consent : she little thinks how dear she will pay for all this resistance, and the immense trouble she has given me. I long to be revenged on the dear little prude.—Poor soul, she is gone quietly to rest to-night, flattering herself, I believe, that his Lordship and me intend no longer persecuting her as she calls it ; for we agreed on my arrival (fearing lest she might suspect any
scheme,

scheme, and avail herself of flight) to behave towards her with reserve, and barely pay the respect of common politeness. The inward satisfaction this constrained behaviour afforded her was visible; her features were illumined with a gleam of pleasure too long a stranger to her lovely face, and that melancholy which seemed to pervade every thought, has given way to a soft dejection. She talked with more vivacity than I had ever before heard her: at Lady Mountvillars's request, after dinner, she sung one of Martini's soft pathetic airs—What a voice! what expression! Oh, George, I never before beheld a more bewitching creature—by Heaven she must be mine, or I shall run distracted; and yet I fear the enchanting syren is in love with that worthless brother of mine; for after tea to-day, while the ladies were preparing for a walk, I took up a pocket-

book, which lay among some drawings of Augusta's, curiosity prompted me to look into it—but judge of my mortification when the following lines caught my eye—

Thus, far from Dashwood, to the winds I mourn,
Alike unheard, unpity'd, and forlorn.

I cursed the whole sex, and hardly recovered a tolerable degree of composure before her Ladyship and Augusta returned. With as much non-chalance as I could assume I said, “ Miss Fitzherbert, I have been gratifying my eyes looking at some of your beautiful drawings; you seem to have no mercy on your fingers; do you employ your pen with as much facility as your pencil? Some ladies have a wonderful facility and pleasure in making and applying quotations.” With a deep blush, and tremulous voice, she replied, “ I can

boast of no great merit, my Lord, in either of those employments, particularly the latter, as I seldom employ my pen except in writing to my friends."

"Oh, what would I give," replied I, "for a sight of some of those letters; I doubt not but the names of Raymond and Dashwood (with an emphasis) are often honoured with a place in them."

"It would be surprizing, my Lord, if they did not," said Augusta, "names that have occasioned such unspeakable inquietude and distress to me." I was going to reply, when his Lordship summoned us to attend him round some of the grounds. Lady Mountvillars and Augusta soon after contrived, under some trifling pretence, to leave us.

Lord Mountvillars is under continual apprehension lest his niece should escape before our scheme is carried into execution, which he has determined shall

be to-morrow ; for should Augusta contrive to secrete herself for three months more, the time of his Lordship's guardianship will be at an end, and she will possess the liberty of her own disposal.

The plan we purpose to pursue is as follows :—Lady Mountvillars is to be sent on some of his Lordship's business to a town seven miles distant ; and near this place is a friend of his Lordship, who is in orders, and to be sent for as soon as Lady Mountvillars is set off. Harriet is to persuade Augusta to go with her to a remote part of the house, well adapted for an affair of secrecy, and then (the special licence being provided) my Lord and I, with Mr. —, follow, and complete the business. I cannot help contemplating my near approaching triumph, yet am I here scribbling to you till four o'clock in
the

the morning ; it is time, therefore, to bid you adieu. I shall write you again immediately after the ceremony is over, when I intend setting off for Raymond Park immediately. Your's,

RAYMOND.

POSTSCRIPT.

I have broke open my letter for the purpose of subjoining the most unfortunate intelligence that ever reached the eye of a friend. Hell and all its furies have leagued against me, and destroyed the fairest prospect of reaching the summit of my desires, by conjuring up a fiend, in the form of a wife, at the very instant of time. Yes, my dear friend, the secret is discovered, my plans defeated, and Augusta can be no longer deceived, nor Lord Mountvillars cover his own plans by veiling them

them with my honourable pretensions.
—By Heaven, she shall still be mine !
—How the devil my wife could be here, I cannot divine !—She shall, however, dearly pay for the interruption she has given to my happiness—I will at least have the satisfaction of wreaking my vengeance on her, since she has so unfortunately again put herself into my power.

Vexed and mortified as I am, I can remain here no longer ; therefore, as quick as four horses can speed, you will see me in town. Once more adieu.

R.

LET-

LETTER XXIV.

THE HON. HENRY MOUNTVILLARS TO THE
HON. FREDERICK DASHWOOD.

St. Helena.

SOME time has elapsed, my dear Dashwood, since I wrote to you; I was then in expectation of leaving India soon, but our regiment being shortly after countermanded, was the reason of prolonging my stay there; though whatever my pen may do, I am sure my thoughts expatiate nowhere oftener, or with more pleasure than upon England, which happy spot I hope shortly to reach, having obtained leave of absence on account of my health, which has suffered, in some measure, from the climate. If you received my last letter, Dashwood, you will not wonder at my anxiety and im-

patience to reach a country that contains my whole stock of happiness. Never did I more strongly feel the influence of the *amor patriæ* than within the two last two years of my life. How true is the observation that the blessings we enjoy never appear so highly valuable as when we are in danger of being deprived of them ! Yes, my friend, I long once more to tread

The land of scholars and the nurse of arms.

Doubly endeared to me by the indissoluble bonds of love and friendship.

The pensive exile, bending with his woe,
To stop too fearful, and too faint to go,
Casts a long look where England's glories shine,
And bids his bosom sympathize with mine.

A life spent out of the world (for such a one must we call a situation far removed from all our friends and connexions)

nexions) has its hours of despondence, its inconveniences, its sufferings, as numerous and as real, though not of the same sort, as a life spent in the midst of it. The power we have over our minds, aided by a laudable pride, which we catch from those who seem to love us, is our best support in either of these conditions. As to myself, I cannot boast at present of my spirits, my situation, employments, or industry, the days and the nights pass, and I feel no advance but that one thing to which we are all tending.

My endeavours to acquire a genteel income, independent of my father, have not been crowned with success; so that I have but one distant hope of being united to the idol of my soul, and that one depends on the will and caprice of another. I fear my father's approbation will not be easily obtained,

unless it fully answers his idea of an advantageous alliance; and should I marry without his consent, he has vowed to disinherit me; and I cannot flatter myself with possessing so large a portion of his affection, as to induce me to suppose he will overlook the smallest deviation from his parental mandate; for though my Matilda possesses every accomplishment and amiable qualification that can render woman desirable to man, yet she is now without the only perfection his Lordship prizes, a large fortune, owing to an unfortunate shipwreck on their passage to England, in which Mr. Conway lost all his fortune, except a very small portion he had left in India; of which unfortunate accident Matilda informed me soon after it happened; but that was the only letter I have had the happiness to receive from her, though I have written with earnestly impor-

tuning an answer several times since. Her long and unexplained silence racks me with the most torturing apprehensions, lest any new calamity should have befallen the woman I adore ; or, perhaps, surrounded by the gay herd of fashion's votaries, and dissipation's slaves, that she should no longer remember one whose vows she once condescended to listen to : for, alas, too often is the last remaining spark of affection wholly extinguished by the coquetry of a few hours, the idle employment of fools, who, void of every principle of honour, divert themselves at the expence of the unthinking part of the sex, who weakly conceive the common expressions of gallantry as the effusions of a sincere passion, they vainly, often too fatally, imagine their charms are calculated to inspire, till they often sink beneath the inflictions of their delusion.

I will not, however, rank my Matilda among the vain and silly part of her sex. You will laugh at the love-sick strain in which I write, but you must excuse it, for I cannot hide the inquietude of my mind under a semblance of vivacity to which my heart is a stranger. I rambled from place to place to divert my thoughts, but

Still to ourselves in every place consign'd,
Our own felicity we make or find.

You may think me, dear Dashwood in a very poetical humour, which, had you no other conviction, would be sufficient to assure you of your friend's metamorphosis into a sighing lover, for love and poetry are inseparable companions, of which I am going to present you an humble instance, the feeble offspring of a solitary hour, trusting with your usual candour and partiality, you will excuse its defects. It will
serve

serve to assure you I wish not to be thought one of those (as a celebrated author expresses himself) unpromising youths, who, devoid of relish for any of the fine arts, raise suspicions of their being prone to low gratifications, or destined to drudge in the more vulgar and illiberal pursuits of life, which I pray Heaven, may never be the fate of, dear Frederick, your's,

H. MOUNTVILLARS.

P. S. I now transcribe the effusions of my Muse for your perusal.

ECLOGUE

ECLOGUE.

SCENE.—A Defart in Arabia.

Time, Evening.

STILL unpafs'd hills the far horizon meet,
 And defart sands fervently glow with heat;
 And dark'ning shades of melancholy eve
 Tincture the whisp'ring air, and heave
 With solemn move the threat'ning waves of sand
 Round Agib's weary feet, with grief unman'd;
 His weeping eyes still backward turn, to view
 His much-lov'd home through night's all-manta-
 ling hue;

Hid are the summits of the flow'ry plains,
 Loft are the hills blest'd Araby contains.
 "No more," he cries, ye regions of delight,
 Your lovely scenes shall gladden Agib's sight;
 No more the rising Sun's all-chearing beams
 Shall gild your groves, or wanton in your streams;
 The morning's sweets no more in scented gales
 Shall breathe soft whispers thro' your fertile vales!
 Oh, happy swains, who taste on hill or lawn,
 Soft joys, when slumber flies approaching dawn!
 No more to me shall rise its glorious sight,
 And Death soon close these eyes in endless night.

Oh, woe the day, when Abra for a throne,
 Left faithful Agib hopeless love to mourn!

The

"The royal Persian lur'd my fair
 From the sweet tents of peace to scepter'd care ;
 The fickle bosom of the roving youth
 Prov'd a full recompense for injur'd truth ;
 Mistaken, hapless maid, thy own fond heart
 Felt the dire pangs thou cruel didst impart ;
 Mem'ry presents the long-lamented time,
 Ere thy false steps forsook thy native clime,
 Tells the soft incidents of tender love,
 And bids more keen my rising sorrows move :
 How couldst thou leave our smiling, happy home,
 Or the sweet scenes where once you lov'd to
 roam !

For wealth and fame's illusive bliss resign
The constant heart that would be only thine.
On od'rous shrubby plain, gay hill or grove,
Vocal with shepherds songs of artless love ;
There, now absorb'd in solitary woe,
I trace the paths, delightful once to know,
I pin'd my gloomy days, nor e'er forsook
Thy flocks unguarded and neglected crook.
Oh, woe the day, when Abra for a throne,
Left faithful Agib hopeless love to mourn !

“From choicest plants our mutual care had
rear'd,
Myrrh, frankincense, and from the balmy reed,
With

With spicy gums, Arabia's stores, I haste,
And journey lonely o'er this trackless waste,
To my lost Abra, fall'n in beauty's bloom,
To shed their fragrance round her early tomb ;
And while the mis'ries of her fate I mourn,
Forget the hapless griefs that cloud my own ;
But vain the wish, around the whirlwind flies,
Sudden the desert's sandy billows rise,
More near and near the waves surrounding roll,
Till death subdues the tortures of the soul ;
 Since the sad day, when Abra for a throne,
 Left faithful Agib hopeless love to mourn !

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

HON. MISS MOUNTVILLARS TO MRS. O'BRIEN.

Mountvillars Park.

GOOD Heavens, Helen, such a scene !—I have so much to tell, I know not where to begin.—Poor Raymond !—aye, and poor Harriet too !—for I fear I never shall get rid of that whimpering fool, Augusta ; but you shall hear.—Yesterday, after breakfast, I was summoned to my Lord's library, where I found his Lordship and Lord Raymond in close conference. “ Harriet,” said my father, “ we want your assistance in a scheme we have formed to fix the future good fortune of your obstinate cousin, in spite of herself. As soon as Lady Mountvillars is set off, do you find some excuse to take Miss Fitzherbert to the North Gallery, where we

will

will immediately join you with Mr. Norris, for whom I have dispatched a messenger ; and be on your guard that her tears or fits do not work on your sensibility to favour her, and act contrary to my desire, as I mean she shall this morning be made the wife of Lord Raymond."

I assured them of my best endeavours in their cause, and went away on the tip-toe of expectation and curiosity, unable to divine what might be the event of such a novel-like affair ; but yet quite enchanted with the idea of having a part to perform in so romantic an adventure.

I returned to the drawing-room, when finding her Ladyship was gone, immediately went in search of Augusta, and found her fastening a gold chain to the miniature of her father.—

“ Augusta,” said I, “ will you favour me with your company to the North Gallery ; I wish you to go there ?”—If you have no particular reason, Harriet, for my going, I would rather be excused ; the gloomy air of that place adds to my depressed spirits a kind of horror and apprehension that I cannot account for.”—“ But,” replied I, “ it is so fine and light a day, that it will not be so dull as when you last saw it, and I know you are not so foolish as I am, to be afraid of spirits, and such like things, the mere phantoms of weak minds ; besides, my mother desires I would see if her portrait be rightly placed amongst the others ; you must, therefore, my dear Augusta, oblige me, for I cannot go by myself, lest it should be haunted.”—“ If you will have it so, Harriet,” she replied, I will attend you ; but I must first tie ~~this~~ dear remembrance of the best and
most

most beloved of fathers round my neck, as a charm of safety against the evil spirits you seem to think inhabit that place."

I must own, O'Brien, at that instant, I felt rather a disagreeable sensation come over my heart, but it was momentary; and the idea of her ever being in my way silenced my scruples. Away we went, and just as we had entered one door, my father, the Earl, and Mr. Norris came in at another; at sight of them, Augusta endeavoured to retreat; but judging this might be the case, I had fastened it on coming in, she would have dropped to the floor, had I not held her; a death-like paleness overspread her face; and the whole scheme at once seemed to flash across her mind.—"Oh, cruel Harriet!" she exclaimed: Lord Mountvillars took her by the hand, and said
"Miss

“ Miss Fitzherbert, it is high time to put an end to these airs ; no expostulations, no tragedy rants, no artifice, shall move my firm resolve to see you made Lady Raymond before we quit this place, therefore comply as you ought and shall.”

Lord Raymond, advancing to her, said, “ My charming Augusta, now—” She interrupted him by falling on her knees to my father, crying, “ Spare, spare me, my Lord !” and dropped senseless on the ground. I was provided with every thing necessary to be administered on such occasions, notwithstanding the application of which, it was a long time before she recovered. Lord Raymond was distracted, and I really believe would have relinquished the plan, had not Augusta at that moment opened her eyes, and, finding herself supported in the arms of Lord
Raymond,

Raymond, screamed, and sprung towards the door; Lord Mountvillars caught her, and desired Mr. Norris to begin the ceremony. I was so weak, Helen, as to feel it necessary to have recourse to my lavender bottle, in spite of all my fortitude. Scarce had the clergyman gone through three sentences, before a violent noise was heard at one of the doors—"Who is there?" cried Lord Mountvillars. "Open the door, my Lord," replied a voice, (that I knew to be Augusta's friend, Miss Conway) "I must see my friend."—"You cannot now see her," replied his Lordship; "I insist on your going away; proceed with the ceremony." At that moment the door was broke open, and in came Miss Conway, with Mr. and Mrs. C——, with a new servant of ours: Augusta flew to her friend, who instantly fell into her arms, exclaiming, "Oh, Heavens, Mr. Dash-

wood!"—The whole company seemed thunderstruck, especially Raymond, whose looks and confusion I cannot describe; the servant then approaching his Lordship, said, "Take back your bribe, my Lord, here it is; I cannot be the villain you would have me; I am witness, my Lord, of your marriage with that injured Lady," pointing to Miss Conway, who had fainted. Lord Raymond was too confused and chagrined to give way to his passion, but instantly darted out of the room, nor have we seen him since.

When Miss Conway recovered, she informed us, that Lord Raymond, under the name of Dashwood, had married her at Florence, of which she could produce the certificate, and soon after left her; then turning to Augusta, "Oh, my friend, how much pain might have been spared you, had I known

I known Lord Raymònd was the artful, cruel Dashwood." But as I have no talent for describing the pathetic, I cannot with effect inform you of what passed between the friends. Augusta was so ill, as to make it necessary she should be put to bed; and her friend staid by her the rest of the day, while I was left to entertain the two drones who came with her.

You may readily conceive the humour his Lordship was in, from being thus defeated in his schemes. There was also a fine piece of work between Augusta and my mother when she returned, and was informed of the affair; for Augusta, in her opinion, is a pattern of perfection, which she continually holds up for my imitation:

In the evening Mr. and Mrs. C——, accompanied by Lady Raymond, returned

turned home ; they live but three miles from us. This morning early a note was brought to Augusta, acquainting her, that they were attacked in their way home last night by a number of armed men, who had forcibly taken Lady Raymond from them. In consequence of this unexpected event, Mr. C——, with all possible dispatch, sent messengers in every direction, to learn, if possible, the route they had taken, but to no manner of purpose ; and that they were in the greatest anxiety and distress on her account.

You will readily imagine this occasioned another strange scene of confusion, in which Augusta sustained the principal part. But I assure you it afforded no entertainment to me ; and, indeed, I was at length so heartily tired of it, that I hastened to my favourite Pavillion, to scribble this epis-

tolary account to you, and am now going to pay a visit or two, for among them I am absolutely *bored* to death.

Adieu, dear O'Brien,

HARRIET MOUNTVILLARS.

LETTER XXVI.

THE HON. FREDERICK DASHWOOD TO THE
HON. HENRY MOUNTVILLARS.

York.

DEAR MOUNTVILLARS,

IT is impossible for me to express my feelings ; my thoughts are vainly employed on what I have lost, and can never recover ; Augusta is the wife of Lord Raymond ; I am scarcely yet master enough of myself to inform you

of the fatal stroke that has crushed my fondest hopes; though familiarized with the idea, and convinced within myself that the event would justify my prediction, I yet flattered myself it might be otherwise, and that very thought, though contrary to reason, enabled me to bear up against the malice of adverse fortune, that deprived me of the power to follow the wishes of my heart.

I was preparing to set out for the neighbourhood of Mountvillars Park, where my acquaintance would have authorized occasional visits, when a letter from my friend Pelham, who had travelled that way, gave me the information of Miss Fitzherbert's having been privately married to Lord Raymond, and that they had left Mountvillars Park.

I delayed not a moment to pursue my intention of going to Nottinghamshire, resolved to ascertain the truth of the distracting intelligence. When at the town of —, where I stopped, several carriages drove hard past the inn, with favours in the servants hats, and the bye-standers exclaimed, “There goes Lord Raymond.” Conviction flashed on my mind with all its train of horrid ideas. Certainty of her misery was superior agony to my own deprivation of all future peace; the probability of becoming a spectator of her sufferings was insupportable; I instantly resolved to fly where distance might save me from the dreadful conflict, and proposed making the tour of the Lakes; my road lay by Mountvillars Park; but unable to bear the sight of a place so fatal to my peace, I soon made the speed of my horse bear me far from it.

I am

I am now a voluntary exile from all the scenes of former happiness; my sole consolation is, that in whatever part of the world I may be, I shall still live in your esteem and affection; and that no accident of life, no distance of time or place, can ever alter you in my esteem.

Our friendship has been of long duration, and we have interchanged many letters on pleasanter subjects; and even now, when I can no longer preserve this old custom, I am unwilling to give myself the pain of imagining these will be less acceptable to you, though they may create a participation of painful melancholy.

The observation of Pelham, that I am not wholly indifferent to the lovely Augusta, feeds the flame which the utmost exertion of our boasted reason

would weakly and vainly endeavour to
subdue.

Were I crown'd the most imperial Monarch,
Thereof most worthy ; were I the fairest youth
That ever made eye swerve ; had I force and
knowledge

More than was ever man's, I would not prize
them

Without her love : for her employ them all,
Command them, and condemn them to her service,
Or their own perdition.

This rambling life may, in some degree, lessen the pangs of reflection, and afford to a wandering solitary some undisturbed hours of mental happiness.— It will at least exclude me from the obtrusions of that insignificant society, to which we are too often exposed, and whose sympathy or condolence most frequently quicken the pangs of sorrow they profess to alleviate. You will however admit, should this not altogether

together meet your opinion, there is at least much of truth in the observation. Time only can heal the wounds of the anguished mind, and our best consolation arises from the irradiations of hope.

Farewel, dear Mountvillars ; I purpose immediately to pursue my journey, on my having dispatched this to you, and made some necessary arrangements.

Believe me your's sincerely,

FREDERICK DASHWOOD.

LETTER XXVII.

THE COUNTESS OF RAYMOND TO MISS
FITZHERBERT.

The Abbey.

BELOVED AUGUSTA,

THOUGH uncertain whether these lines will ever reach your hands, I am irresistibly impelled to write—and though a pencil and the covers of some letters I chanced to have in my pocket are my only means. How long must I remain ignorant of the welfare of my friend, and of the severe effects our last dreadful interview may have had on her health.

I have been distracted with fear and apprehension ever since the moment of my arrival at this dismal place. To
what

what obscurity I am brought, I know not ; nor whether I am doomed to linger out a wretched life far distant from all I hold dear on earth ; no friend, no pitying voice to impart comfort to my bleeding heart ; a prisoner, to whom I know not ; though I can suspect no other person than that cruel, treacherous wretch, Lord Raymond.

What various and painful conjectures, Augusta, must you have experienced in this long suspense of my fate !—The moment I had got into Mr. C—'s carriage, and bid you farewell, my heart presaged some dreadful event.—We had just got into the lane leading by the first park-gate, when the carriage suddenly stopped ; the door was instantly pulled open with violence, and somebody attempted to drag me out ; screaming, and terrified in the extreme, I clung to the side, till my

feeble strength being exhausted I was lifted across the road, and put into a chaise and four, evidently waiting to facilitate the execution of this horrid scheme. Near to the chaise stood two or three ill looking men, as I conceived them to be, but so dusky was the evening, I could perceive nothing distinctly. I called to the servants to save me, but their protection could avail nothing against superior numbers : in a moment the horses were lashed into a full gallop, and the last sounds that died on my ear, as I sunk lifeless to the bottom of the chaise, were oaths and execrations among the servants, and triumphing shouts from the wretches who were thus barbarously forcing me I knew not where.

I must have remained a long time in this state of insensibility ; for when returning sense roused me to a sense of

my deplorable situation, I found the carriage had stopped ; and imagining, from the noise, they were then changing horses, for the blinds were up, I made an effort to call for assistance, but my voice was drowned in the confusion of sounds, and they quickly drove off again.

About midnight, as I judged it to be, they opened the door, and offered me wine and some other refreshment ; I eagerly thrust out my head, to look round for help, but all seemed a wide and dreary common ; and to all my earnest entreaties that they would tell me where they were going to carry me, I could gain no answer ; and in this manner was I harrassed all night, and next day hurried with a rapidity that almost made me giddy. They only stopped at little lone houses, where they permitted me to rest for short in-

tervals; at length, wholly spiritless, and half dead with fatigue and apprehension, I resigned myself, without uttering more fruitless enquiries, to their guidance.

The next evening, they obliged me to get out of the chaise, which stopped upon a bye-road, far from the sight of any dwelling, and set me upon a double horse, a servant riding by the side, and thus, through frightful lanes, and by tremendous hills, conveyed me to this detested solitude.

I have not yet been out of the room they first put me into, and which I entered with a heavy heart and trembling steps: it is a wide lofty apartment; oaken wainscoted, and casement windows, which even at mid-day gives but a melancholy light, that scarcely illuminates its gloomy space: the furniture

ture consists of an old little bed, with green stuff curtains, placed in a corner, an elbow chair and a very small table ; the remains of an ebony cabinet, inlaid with silver, that fills up a deep recess, bespeak this habitation to have seen better days.

I can discover nothing from my windows but a stupendous craggy hill, that rises almost to the clouds, and below a solitary cow grazing ; and an old woman, who answers the description of Otway's hag, is the only human face I have yet seen. This hateful duenna is my only attendant or visitant, and who carefully locks the door every time she goes in and out : I might easily overpower her, and rush out of this prison, but I am too dejected in spirit to make the attempt. I have hitherto passed the doleful hours away upon my miserable bed, where sleep
has

has seldom visited my aching eyes, that are now swollen to an incredible degree with weeping, and there ruminate on my misfortunes, and all the variegated and uncommon events of my life.

Whatever sufferings may ensue to me from this strange seclusion from the world, I bless Heaven, inasmuch as I have been the means of preserving my dear Augusta from a fate too dreadful to behold even in idea, and that pleasing thought will in some measure alleviate what future misery Lord Raymond may design to be my portion.— Perhaps, were I to attempt an escape from this confinement, I should only change my abode of wretchedness, and I might probably fall again into Lord Raymond's power, if I sought to return, where I might have the comfort of beholding my beloved friend. The
interposition:

interposition of any one can avail nothing in softening his hard heart, or save me from his power ; I wish never to see him again ; my only consolation for a long time had been the persuasion we should never more meet. In this obscurity I can indulge my desponding thoughts, and mourn the sad fate of my first, my only love—Never more can I hope to see my dear Mountvillars—Alas ! I feel the compunctions of guilt even when a thought of him comes across my mind.

What a few happy days were those, Augusta, when you introduced your friend to his amiable mother !—The resemblance and manners were so strikingly alike, that her presence seemed to restore a joy to my heart, which had been long extinguished there. How flattering, and peculiarly welcome, were her kind expressions of the prepossession

possession she felt in my favour, independent of my bearing the strong recommendation of being her Augusta's friend !

But I am now warned against communicating any thing farther to you at present—I hear the old woman coming—I must put away every appearance that might indicate I had been writing ; for that, she told me, is an indulgence I am expressly forbidden to receive—Pens, ink, and paper, are prohibited articles to me—But I shall continue on the watch to avail myself of the first opportunity of continuing my epistle.

CONTI-

CONTINUATION.

MY dear Augusta, I am rid of my troublesome governess for the present, and have just obtained a prospect of continuing the letter I began yesterday. When the old lady visited me this morning, curiosity impelled me to snatch the moment of liberty to explore the solitary scenes around me ; I darted from her feeble hand, and hastening with trembling steps, descended a wide dismal stair-case, which led into what appeared once to have been a hall, but now in total ruins, and open to the sky. On one side hung the remains of armoury, rusted with age and weather ; fragments of Gothic pillars, and the fallen roof overgrown with ivy, almost obstructed the passage thro' which I made my way ; but, notwithstanding,

standing, I eagerly ran forward to survey the limits of a prison so hateful to me.

It is an old abbey, only a small part remaining entire, and containing a few rooms, one of which is my abode, and close to its walls stands a little thatched cottage, where lives the old woman ; high hills, that rise on each side, form a long narrow valley, the extent of which I could not distinguish, from the many windings ; and deaf to the cries of the sybil, who followed me as quickly as she could, I pursued my way up a difficult path, among stubs of trees and under wood, to the summit of the mountain before me ; I gained it at length, and throwing myself almost exhausted on the brown rocky ground, gazed wildly over the heath, which spread as far as the eye could reach. I could not conjecture what part of the
country

country I was in, having been so long abroad, and before acquainted with so small a part of it.

I wandered about some time, till spying a horseman at some distance, I waited impatiently for his approach: he was a young lad, loaded with provisions and parcels; he called out to me, "What do you there?—My mother would be half-killed, should you run away."

From this and his subsequent conversation, I found he was son to the old woman. Fortunately, having some little money in my purse, I soon found the means to purchase his good will, and prevailed upon him to return to the town he came from, which I learnt was about four miles off, to bring me materials for writing, and some other trifling articles.

I waited

I waited for his return with anxious impatience, counting the moments he was gone, and fluttered in spirits lest any untoward accident should discover the business of his errand. He at last returned agreeable to my wishes, and informed me of the means by which I might convey the account of my unhappy situation to my dear Augusta. For this purpose, I have engaged to meet him on the heath to-morrow, when he faithfully promises to execute whatever orders I may trust him with. Perhaps it may be the last time I shall have an opportunity of sending to you, as he assures me a man has been sent for to be an additional guard over me, and prevent my going out, or at least to keep a close watch over me, so that I cannot take any step without being subject to their observation.—To what a distressing situation am I reduced.—Heaven be my comfort.

Write

Write to me, my dear Augusta, all that has passed, and all that concerns yourself. I inclose you a direction to the town, from whence the lad will convey your letter safe to me.

Do not as yet attempt any thing on my account, as it may possibly only cause future uneasiness to yourself.—
Adieu, my friend, I hardly can write the villain's name.

MATILDA RAYMOND

LET.

LETTER XXVIII.

THE EARL OF RAYMOND TO MAJOR DELVILLE.

Raymond Park.

HERE am I, George, cursing my unlucky stars, and meditating revenge on my tormentors ; I have already given an example of my vengeance on that woman whom I am obliged to call wife, by sending her off to an old, uninhabited ruinous abbey, situated on a small estate I possess in Derbyshire, among the wildest of its mountains. There I intend she shall remain out of my way, and secure enough she will be ; for there is no human soul lives near it, except an old woman and her son, who inhabit a contiguous cottage.

Forgive

Forgive me, George, that I never before told you of that thoughtless marriage of mine. When I was abroad, before my father's death, I went with a party of young gentlemen to Florence *incog*. During my continuance there, I became acquainted with a Mr. Conway, whose daughter, for her uncommon beauty and enchanting vivacity, was the object of universal attention and admiration ; I saw and loved. The violence of my passions, you well know, will not admit of restraint ; but finding all proposals, without marriage, would be rejected, and without having any consideration beyond the immediate possession of the object of my desires, I formally applied to Mr. Conway for his consent to our union ; he seemed highly delighted with the prospect of so eligible a match for his only daughter, having heard of my ample
fortune,

fortune, and his own circumstances being rather embarrassed.

Finding my importunities urgent for the match immediately taking place, and judging my intentions as honourable as I professed them to be, the provident father commanded Miss Conway to receive my addresses, which with evident reluctance she consented to, in obedience to her father's will. But whatever arguments Mr. Conway used, they were at last successful, and the sprightly Matilda was linked with your thoughtless friend in the holy bands of matrimony ; from which, like many others, my greatest joy would be in a safe deliverance.

As soon, however, as the intoxication of passion was over, and reason began to reassume her empire, I reflected

Reflected on the madness of my imprudence, and surfeited with the enjoyment of her for whom, before possession, I would have risked my life and fortune; I was now exercising my brain to discover some means by which I must extricate myself from this matrimonial dilemma; when, luckily, the old man sent word he was taken dangerously ill, and without hope of recovery, and earnestly requested to see his daughter.

My tender-hearted spouse readily attended to the dying injunction of a beloved parent, who but a short time survived this pious discharge of her filial duty. After his decease and subsequent interment, her time was occasionally employed by discharging some obligations he had required of her in his last moments; and one day, during her absence, having previously con-

certed the scheme, and made every necessary arrangement to facilitate my purpose,

I hastily took leave, and left the nymph
To think on what was past, and sigh alone.

To guard her, however, against the pressure of immediate want, I inclosed a draft in a letter to her, in which I gave her to understand that she must never expect to see me again, but that I would remit a further allowance for her future support.

In the letter I left behind me, I gave her some hints of my speedily embarking for India, without any fixed intention of ever again returning to Europe; for in the course of our matrimonial connection, I had never most distantly hinted at any thing relative to my family connections, either to her or her father,

father, so that I thought myself perfectly safe against any circumstance that could in future lead her to a discovery of my connections.

I immediately set off for England with all possible expedition, determining to keep the affair a profound secret, conscious of the foolish act into which my impetuous passion had hurried me; and, indeed, had it not been for her blundering upon Mountvillars Park, I might now have been in the happy possession of my adored Augusta; but I will not yet give her up, for no effort of human exertion shall be left unattempted to accomplish so desirable an object.

Last night I dispatched an express to Lord Mountvillars with the information, that I should consider him as immediately responsible for the sum he

is indebted to me, if he does not use his utmost endeavours with Miss Fitzherbert in my behalf; for when affairs are brought to so eventful a crisis, delicacy and honour are no longer of any consideration.

Now, George, judge of my perturbation, and pray for my success—*pray*, did I say?—If thou dost, it must be to the *Old One*, for I am sure you are too wicked a dog, as well as myself, to offer them any where else with success; and therefore, as the fervency of your petitions may be of little service to me, I must not rest upon my arms, but summon all the powers of *Tartarus* to be propitious to my undertakings; for now I have gone too far to recede, or to be intimidated from my pursuit by hazard of danger; for if perdition must be my doom, I may as well receive the bounty money.

Oh,

Oh, George, what gnawing vultures are the passions of men!—Through them is he on a continual rack—ever impelled to the pursuit of his destruction, in the chace of pleasures that fly from his approach, or sicken him in the enjoyment.

Whatever steps I may take in this business, you may rely on soon hearing from your friend,

RAYMOND.

LETTER XXIX.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO THE COUNTESS OF
RAYMOND.

Mountvillars Park.

THOUGH distracted with conjectures for the fate of a beloved friend, doubtful of ever more seeing her, or without assurance of this reaching her, still I must write. The fond idea of conversing with my Matilda for a moment soothes an agony in my breast that would be otherwise insupportable, and impells me to continue the hourly detail of my unmerited sufferings !—

Oh, my loved friend ! what weeks of suspense and anxiety have I endured since the morning that brought me intelligence

intelligence of the dreadful disaster that had befallen you!—The fatal, yet innocent cause of your misfortunes, in bringing you here, is now a prey to grief and anguish till now unknown to her.—Yes, peace and health are for ever fled from your Augusta—Serene tranquillity no longer irradiates her cheerless bosom—Night and day are my melancholy hours consumed in unavailing lamentations, that I should have brought so great calamities on the friend dearest to my heart. My own miserable fate I could have sustained with resignation, but to have involved my Matilda in such distress, chills my very blood with horror. I hardly know what is going forward here. Mine eyes are too steeped in grief for observation, and my mind too disquieted to give attention. Heaven be your safeguard and protector, and shield you from the malice of your enemies.

Early yesterday morning my kind and indulgent aunt proposed our taking a little air on one of the terraces, and we happened to fix on the one next the road; she had not walked long there before I observed Mr. Dashwood galloping very swiftly by; he did not look towards us, but rode on—"There he is!" I exclaimed, taking hold of my aunt's arm. "Who, my dear?—for Heaven's sake, compose yourself." I burst into tears, and faintly replied, "Mr. Dashwood."

Oh, Matilda, at that moment, it seemed as if the last stab was given to my heart, to see him pass by the house wherein he must have heard what I had undergone on his account, without calling, or even deigning to bestow a look;—a conduct so altered was too much for my feelings—I could not have done so by him.

"Oh,

“ Oh, Augusta,” said my aunt, “ I have long feared there wanted not the cruel stroke of an unpropitious attachment to complete your sufferings !— but, my dear girl, let your superior understanding be your comforter and support under the misfortunes and disappointments to which the precarious condition of human life makes us liable. I dare not even flatter you with the distant hope——”

“ Oh, my beloved aunt,” replied I, “ think not your Augusta will give way to the weakness that would cherish unreturned affection ; but the appearance of undeserved neglect from one who has merited my gratitude and esteem, cannot fail to hurt feelings less poignant than mine at such a time ; without degrading himself in the eyes of the most scrupulous, he might surely have called to——”

“ But,” continued my aunt, “ a thousand things might prevent his stopping at Mountvillars Park ; delicacy on his unworthy brother’s account ; his not having seen you since the unfortunate duel, or numberless other occurrences, may have occasioned his seeming indifference, however strongly inclination might have prompted him to the contrary. To one grateful and affectionate, like Augusta, I almost fear to say, I have no doubt, by the many observations I have made, that you alone possess the heart of the generous Dashwood.”

I cannot tell you, Matilda, half the different sensations that operated in my mind at the conclusion of this ingenuous speech. How soothing, how kind was that dear woman ? This walk afforded me some small gleam of satisfaction, I would have said pleasure,
were

were it not a word long since expunged from the volume of my sad vocabulary.

Indeed, the idea of being dear to Daffwood, and worthy of his affection, would have cheered a little my broken spirits, had not the thought of my Matilda, and the appearance of Lord Mountvillars, instantly effaced every momentary hope I had indulged of seeing better times.

His Lordship now more closely advancing, with a stern forbidding look, said, " Miss Fitzherbert, while you remain under my protection, I desire you will confine your walks to the Flora Garden, to which you can always go out of your dressing-room. As for you, Lady Mountvillars, who have so unhappily encouraged Augusta in her disobedience to my authority,

you must, for the future, dispense with her company. Your own imprudence renders this injunction absolutely necessary; and I am determined, without dispute, to be the uncontrouled master of all who live under my roof."

Upon uttering this haughty mandate, he walked away, without giving either of us time to reply. I mournfully kissed Lady Mountvillars's hand, and retired to my room. There I gave unrestrained vent to my tears, and spent the remainder of the morning in solitary sorrow.

I was called to dinner as usual. Nothing material passed, except my being so ill, as to be obliged to retire immediately as the servants withdrew. I have remained here ever since, pleased for the present with the retreat, tho' only to indulge in reflection.

Miss

Miss Mountvillars vouchsafed to come and see me in the evening. "I am come, Augusta," said she, "to bring you some news; do but hear this paragraph in an old newspaper, that has just fallen into my hands.

"Last week was married, at the
"seat of Lord Mountvillars, the Right
"Honourable the Earl of Raymond,
"to Miss Fitzherbert, only daughter
"of the late Sir John Fitzherbert,
"Baronet."

Good God, Harriet!" exclaimed I, with an emotion of surprise, "are you in earnest?"—"Look at it yourself, my dear," said she, "what is there so alarming in it, that your looks should be so expressive of disapprobation?"—"Is it not painful, Harriet, to have one's misfortunes made the sport of every idle licentious tongue—

to

to be scoffed at by the weak, and sneered at by the ignorant and malicious? But I suppose the affair is every where public by this time—Would that every circumstance of it were fully known, that shame and infamy might affix to all who were concerned in the infamous transaction.”—Harriet seemed to enjoy my confusion, and precipitately retired.

Oh, my Matilda, what effect may this have had on Dashwood's mind!—Surely he could not be undeceived at the time he passed us yesterday; and this accounts for the shyness of his behaviour. Who knows how it may influence his affections, when he is persuaded that I am the wife of his brother?—I tremble to look forward—Oh, what would I give that I could inform him of my real situation, what I have suffered, and what I am likely to suffer.

suffer. My fate seems hastening to a crisis, and melancholy apprehensions cloud and overwhelm every prospect before me.

Heaven only can tell what the intentions of the cruel Lord Mountvillars are. Something seems in agitation which I cannot develope. I suppose they are again meditating on some diabolical scheme to disturb my quiet, and interrupt my happiness—May Heaven dispose them to cease their persecution of a helpless, forsaken, and unfortunate woman !

A letter from my Matilda !—I haste to see the contents.

CONTINUATION.

Oh, my beloved friend, with what rapture did I receive a letter that bore the mark of Matilda's hand!—But what a transition to the agony of grief, when I read the account of your sufferings—What must you have endured! and so to be deprived of all means that tend to alleviate them, even of the consoling and soothing voice of friendship?—And must you remain in a situation so dreadful?—Hard, hard decree; but as my friend thinks it for for the best, I submit for the present, though it is repugnant to my feelings for a moment to conceal so diabolical a scheme.

I will, however, immediately write to C—— Lodge, and acquaint that
worthy

worthy family with the contents of your letter, which has added so much disquietude to my mind. I have sent this agreeable to your direction, assuring my dearest Matilda, that all her griefs are sincerely participated in by her friend,

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT..

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

MRS. O'BRIEN TO THE DUCHESS OF L——.

Fitzherbert Castle.

I AM, my dear Bell, as busy as possible, making new arrangements and dispositions in our lately acquired situation : it is in reality a noble place ; such grandeur and magnificence every where displayed !—The grounds extensive and beautiful ; the house immensely large, but few of the rooms are modernized, these however I shall have new modelled hereafter ; it stands in the centre of a delightful park, well stocked, and of considerable extent ; at the entrance there is a grand hall, supported on each side with a colonade of
marble.

marble pillars : the niches, which are numerous, are filled with the finest statues of the heroes, poets, and philosophers of antiquity, executed in the first stile of our best modern masters ; opposite to the door is a superb music gallery, decorated with a beautiful figure of Apollo.

I intend, as soon as it can be made convenient, and our affairs are properly settled, to have a masked ball and concert ; and to accommodate us with dancing, there is an excellent picture-gallery, for which nothing could be better adapted, and at each end of it, there is a suite of apartments, which render it convenient for collation, card, or supper parties.

Upon the whole, considered in every point of view, it will be one of the most charming places in the world.—

I hope

I hope your Grace will honour Fitzherbert Castle with your presence, when you cannot but be sensible with how much pleasure my best attentions will be exerted to make the time pass with pleasure.

At our first route, we shall have the most delightful set of catch fingers; and leave it to my management to collect all the smartest fellows and pretty women of our acquaintance, besides many others, who are neither the one thing nor the other, yet serve occasionally to excite one's merriment, and whom we are under the necessity of inviting sometimes, if only to fill up a blank at our motley parties, and supply our tables with cash, though not of the least importance any where else.

I really believe I shall invite the Mountvillars family, for the sake of
mortifying

mortifying that fullen, peevish creature Augusta with the sight, and for that purpose shall give our sprightly friend Harriet a hint to bring her at all events. You must then know, I owe this bit of formal prudery a kind of grudge for engaging the whole attention of one of the handsomest men in company, for whom I had entertained a kind of *penchant*, when she was last in town, I mean that dear insensible, Frederick Dashwood.

But, my dear Duchess, I shall soon have ample revenge, without having any hand in it myself, and that you may guess will give me infinite delight. I expect every day to hear of his having drowned or shot himself at the Lakes, where I hear he is gone, to dissipate the melancholy hours of a love-sick swain, by abstracting himself entirely from the *beau monde* and all
its

its gay and brilliant circles. Alas ! poor Dashwood !

What a strange bustle has there been made about Lord Raymond's affair ?—It is become quite a Town-talk.—It is, to be sure, an extraordinary adventure, and has at least the merit of novelty. Harriet gave me the whole history of it. I need not repeat it to you, for it is in every body's mouth, and makes the chief topic of every conversation. Indeed, it cost me much time and trouble to make it known—for I could not bear the idea that so whimsical and romantic an affair should die away in secrecy. I took the great trouble of paying many extraordinary visits when I received Harriet's letter, that my select circle of friends might not be behind hand in their intelligence, and to relieve my own mind from the weight that must have oppressed it, had I not disclosed

disclosed just as many of the circumstances, as would excite their curiosity to know the rest.

I want much to know who this Lady Raymond is—Some obscure person, I suppose; she cannot be one of us, or we should not have been so long ignorant of her history.

O'Brien calls me to point out what alterations I wish to be made. I am glad of something to divert my attention from more serious thoughts; for O'Brien has plunged still deeper into the abyss of gambling, trusting to his new rent-roll, so that we must prize this estate as our only and last resource to supply the means of keeping up appearances, which it will amply do, when aided by a few mortgages, and that will be but a trifling consideration, not worth a serious thought, as

it must afford us the opportunity of still keeping up our consequence in the fashionable circles, without which life would be insupportable ; nay, an absolute misery to one who is so doatingly fond of it as is

Your friend,

HELEN O'BRIEN.

LET

LETTER XXXI.

MISS FITZHERBERT TO LADY RAYMOND.

Village of —, Lincolnshire.

DEAR MATILDA,

AFTER innumerable incidents, productive of such various and complicated sufferings, that had nigh overcome my exhausted strength and spirits, I have bid a final adieu to the varied and fluctuating scenes of life, and taken shelter beneath the humble roof of a peaceful cottage, where I can sit down without fear or apprehension, unagitated by terror at what the next hour may produce, and enjoy a more tranquil state of mind than has been my portion for a long time past.

A recollection of the strange circumstances that have driven me here, recalls to my mind all the horrid scenes I have gone through, and awakens me to a sense of the bitter anguish I have sought to avoid. But as you may be anxious to hear them, I shall forego the inconvenience I may sustain, to gratify your curiosity.

Since my last letter, my dear aunt and I were too circumspectly watched by Lord Mountvillars to admit of our having any of those endearing retired conversations, which we often enjoyed so much to the satisfaction of both, whenever we could form a pretence for leaving his Lordship and Miss Mountvillars. These little interviews, indeed constituted the whole of the happiness I enjoyed, while under the roof of his Lordship.

Lord

Lord Mountvillars, with a design of debarring me from all intercourse that might lead to the framing of schemes which would defeat his own, attended us even in our morning employments, and her Ladyship could not take so much as an airing without being closely watched by her Argus-eyed Lord ; while every day brought fresh proof how severely that best of women suffered on my account.

One morning, when I was taking my usual solitary walk in the Flora Garden, my favourite dog escaped from the ribband with which I always led him ; fearful lest an animal I was fond of might share with his ill-fated mistress the enmity of Lord Mountvillars, and by some luckless transgression fall a sacrifice to his vengeance, (as to tempers like his, no opportunity of gratifying malice appears too trivial) I fol-

lowed the runaway far beyond the limits prescribed me, and came suddenly behind the Pavillion, where his Lordship and a gentleman were in earnest conversation at one of the windows; the shrubbery hid me from their sight, and an irresistible curiosity prompted me to an action I had never before been guilty of; I listened attentively, and overheard their conversation.

“Assure Lord Raymond,” said his Lordship to the gentleman, “I will act according to his wishes; I will not fail to take such measures as shall effectually secure in his power that perverse girl. The plan I purpose to pursue is this—I shall insist upon Lady Mountvillars, Harriet, and Augusta, accompanying me to my seat in Northamptonshire, where I must indispensibly go, and fix upon next Friday as the day to proceed on our journey.”

Judge

Judge, O judge the state of my feelings, when I heard the disclosure of so diabolical a scheme !——But I must go on with my narration.

“ Lord Raymond,” continued his Lordship, “ must be in disguise at the —— Inn, in —— ; I know the house perfectly well ; there is a room in which a small private door is concealed by the exact matching of the paper, and the fastening upon the outside ; a back staircase leads to it from a long passage in the yard, by which his Lordship, and whoever else he pleases, may easily get into the room this way ; and there Augusta shall sleep, as I can contrive that by some artifice or other ; from whence they may instantly convey her without noise to the carriage he must have in readiness, and not a soul can have any knowledge of the matter, except those in whom his Lord-

ship may chuse to confide ; besides, they may be far out of reach before Lady Mountvillars will begin making her morning enquiries, so that no possible danger of detection can ensue from a pursuit. By G—d it must be done ; I cannot lose my whole estate through that cursed debt.”

I know not how my limbs supported me while listening to this horrid recital ; I waited no longer, but hastened to my apartment, and throwing myself into a chair, revolved in my mind by what means I could frustrate their diabolical scheme ; and the only probable way of escaping the detestable machinations of my perfidious protector, who made my peace and honour the barter for his own profligacy, was by an immediate flight from a place that afforded no asylum to innocence or virtue.

I knew

I knew that going to Northamptonshire would meet my aunt's approbation, it being a part of the country to which she is extremely partial; and though fully aware I might frustrate the accomplishment of his plot at the inn, I judged, that in a matter of so much consequence to himself, he would leave nothing unattempted that could effect his purpose; hence to remain with him became impossible; I therefore determined upon an elopement, at once to avert the impending danger, and save my dear Lady Mountvillars any further suffering upon my account.

Fortunately, I had then some clothes in my room we had made for a cottager, and I determined that night to make my escape. I dared not communicate my intention to any one, as the success of my plan depended upon the

bundling up a travelling dress of my own, to put on at any future time, when I might safely wear it, I wrote the following letter for Lady Mountvillars, and left it on the table in my room.

“ MY BELOVED AUNT,

“ Be not alarmed that I have thus
 “ clandestinely absconded from Mount-
 “ villars Park. For the preservation
 “ of my own honour, as well as my
 “ personal security, I am compelled to
 “ take this step. To-day I made the
 “ discovery that induced me to it ; but
 “ which is of a nature too delicate to
 “ impart even to you, already plunged
 “ as you are in such unmerited distress
 “ on my account. At a future period
 “ the circumstances will disclose them-
 “ selves. In the mean time, entertain
 “ no apprehension for my safety, but
 “ confide in the prudence of your Au-
 “ gusta,

“ gusta, and join with her in the fervent wish, that she may in happier days (if any such there are in store for her) be blessed again in the valued society of one so dear to her as her beloved aunt.”

At midnight I stole softly from my room, and with trembling hands unbarring the garden door, soon made my way across the walks to a little park gate, that opened to the road. The moon shone bright, and with a trepidation that hardly left me power to breathe, I walked and ran by turns, till I reached ———, which was nearly two miles distant, and there I instantly went to the inn, and took a place in the coach that passed near to the village where I now reside, undisturbed by fear, and content with the enjoyment of rural felicity.

When I arrived here, I found my way to a small farm-house, which I knew to be occupied by an old maid-servant of our family, who had married the owner. They received me with an unaffected welcome, and, unsolicited, in the most hospitable manner tendered me the best asylum their humble means afforded.

The small cottage of this worthy family is situated in a pleasant part of the country, on the verge of those retreats and groves which were the pleasant haunts of sportive infancy; and there I often find employment for the passing hour, in wandering through those once loved scenes of earlier days, and retrace with delight the haunts of youthful innocence, before care, with all its train of evils, or persecution and misfortune, had embittered my days.

Oh,

Oh, Matilda, in this retreat of solitude and peace, you cannot conceive how much the mind of your friend is tranquillized—I reflect with indifference on the vain grandeur of human life, contrasted with the simplicity of rural enjoyment, and pity the weakness of those who, through its vain and fleeting pleasures, are deceived into a belief that human happiness is alone found within the vortex of wealth and opulence. At this moment the sun smiles propitious upon me, and reminds me of my favourite amusement ; for the present I must therefore bid you adieu.



CONTINUATION.

I am just returned from my favourite walk ; but the growing serenity of my mind has received a damp from an incident I little expected ; though, perhaps, more from timidity than any just cause of alarm.

I had reached the spot where my steps almost involuntarily led me ; I mean the mausoleum that contains the remains of my much-lamented father ; but the fastened door alone withheld me from entering the silent sepulchre of the dead, and I could only sit down upon the bank that awfully sloped by its side, and in idea contemplate the mansion of mortality. In this reverie, I fancied my wearied head was resting on the coffin of my father, and leaning
against

against the cold wall, I sighed and sobbed as if my heart would break ; every distressing thought then arose, and I seemed as if just awakened from a troubled dream, wherein company, amusements, and all the vanities and perplexities I have known since the fatal period of his loss, were present to my imagination ; indeed, I felt at that moment as if bereft of every thing dear and valuable to me on earth.

From this state of insensibility, however, I was at length aroused by the barking of my dog *Fidelle*, which I forgot to mention had followed me to —, and remained my constant and faithful companion ever since. I suddenly started up, and pursuing my way down the long walk, I had almost met Mrs. O'Brien, who was coming that way. I flew back with precipitation, in the hope of escaping unseen

by her ; whether she perceived me or not, I cannot tell, but it has greatly disturbed my peace, as I here expected to remain secure from all discovery, unnoticed and unknown. Should she have observed me, I have every thing to fear from her natural levity, or, perhaps, enmity towards me ; however, I try to still such alarming apprehensions, and will not prolong this unpleasant subject.

Indeed, Matilda; you need not any thing to add to the depression of your spirits—enough of sorrow do you already know, without adding to it the weight of another's ; and I fear my letters are calculated to produce that effect on minds of far less feeling than I know your's to possess—but friendship, like our's, cannot conceal its woes, and only laments when it cannot communicate its pleasures. How
sincerely

sincerely do I lament that so much of the former should occupy so large a portion of our correspondence.

I often think, my Matilda, while observing the chearful, healthy looking peasants return from their daily labour, they are the most favoured race of Heaven ; their humble birth and lowly occupation places them far below the reach of that variety of woe, with which cankered care, and goading ambition, annoys the felicity of those whom the chance of fortune has elevated to wealth and grandeur ; their wants are few, and their desires are bounded by their necessities ; their flocks and fields supply them with every comfort, and their necessary labour leaves them no leisure to anticipate evils remote from their observation, and the pressure of the moment

is.

is the only incentive of their action ; their minds are unfouled by worldly perplexity, and the shafts of calamity are in vain directed against their indurated bosoms.

Oh, Matilda, from the inmost recesses of my soul do I envy these happy cottagers—no dissipation enervates their strength, or consumes their time in the pursuit of fallacious pleasure. Innocent festivity at intervals smiles beneath their humble roof, and the evening's mirthful gambol finds no drawback from the morning's reflection.

Had it been my lot to tread in such a lowly path, what felicity might at this moment have brightened every prospect—and perhaps the unenvied companion of him, with whom only my partiality now will allow me to associate

fociate the idea of happiness. I need not add the name of Dashwood, whom you already know, my friend, is not wholly excluded from the tender recollection of

Your unhappy

AUGUSTA FITZHERBERT.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





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